

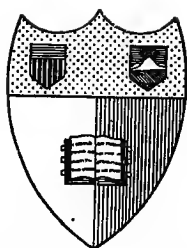
THE AUTOCRAT

IN THE

GREENROOM

WITH

A Play after "Othello"



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THE
AUTOCRAT IN THE GREENROOM;

WITH
A PLAY AFTER "OTHELLO."

BY
WILLIAM SPINK,
AUTHOR OF
"MACALPINE," "SCENES AND SKETCHES IN LEGAL LIFE," ETC.

LONDON:
BICKERS & SON, 1 LEICESTER SQUARE, W.

1890.
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Ballantyne Press
BALLANTYNE, HANSON AND CO.
EDINBURGH AND LONDON

THE AUTOCRAT IN THE GREENROOM.

LADIES and gentlemen, you have no cause to blame Shakespeare for your small financial gains with *The Merchant of Venice*, produced "on a scale of unparalleled magnificence." Every theatre-goer has seen the play; many half a dozen of times. It is true many playgoers can witness a work of this author, even only respectably performed—so rich is it with great life—several times, for once they can see the best play of most other dramatists. But a divided interest generally lies in the accredited genius of the actor after one or two representations are seen. Shylock doubtless has gathered a circle of admirers in each town he has visited, and when he returns, that circle will be increased.

But Shylock, in a new play "after Shakespeare," say *The Jew of London*, would find greater reward for his labour—for a time. If the Manager of the Blackfriars and the Globe himself came on the scene again, he would be surprised at the condition of the art, so fertile in his day. "What! still at Venice and Belmont!" And at how many new theatres would he not discover the place of honour given to *As You Like It*; the first fresh laurels of the new temple hoped to be gained by Rosalind and Orlando; himself still lovingly remembered by some kindly hand, who thinks of his great predecessor in old Adam. "What? so the Forest of Arden is still to the

fore too?" Then at the close of a short season this author is asked to walk into the treasury. The manager, a man of business, as he should be, and without pretensions to all the talents, with most respectful, but melancholy mien cries: "Mr. William Shakespeare, we are all proud of you, but my pride has cost me a bit of money, sir; you don't draw as I expected, my immortal friend. *As You Like It* is played out." The Author of *Hamlet* frowns at this, and begins a speech with something like "Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" But, more gently, he asks if his plays are still "the abstract and brief chronicles of the time;" if his plays still "show the very age and body of the time, his form and pressure"? The manager feels somewhat put out at these queries; and is silent. The Author of *Hamlet* continuing, as he thinks the methods at least of his art might be followed: "Then at this time are they so followed? Do your endeavours keep in the wonted pace?" Still is the theatrical caterer dumb. What does all this mean? He never heard of Shakespeare as a model. Thereupon "the spirit all limitless" shoves a copy of the *Saturday Review*, which was lying on the manager's shelf, into that gentleman's hand, containing a paragraph to the effect that the plays now produced exhibit manners which never existed on land or sea in this or any other age. "My friend," adds the Spirit of the Immortal, "your audiences are not apparently accustomed to nature represented in art by the poets of your day; and it is wonderful they should delight in my abstract and brief chronicles. Are there no *Merchants of London* or of *Bristol*; no forests in Scotland—already lighted up with the genius of the author of *Waverley*—to charm with new scenes, and brief chronicles of what has been and is now? What form and pressure agitate your own age? Have you no spiritual pressure agitating beyond the Prince of Denmark's halting, 'prompted to revenge by heaven and hell'? Surely you are not asleep." Taking down No. 1 of the *New Review*, the indignant spirit continues: "Is it, as stated here,

‘the sun of the drama has set,—the matter is not worth talking about? and the actors are likely to starve for parts?’ Is this the end to which you bring the art raised to the proudest position of all arts! Oh barren, oh hypocritical age!” The manager sinks into his chair—puffed up though he has been in “this so-called nineteenth century”—and stares, wondering what the public would think of this. He is then confronted with the *Fortnightly Review* which asserts that the public will submit to the degradation no longer—that “the first mutterings of a storm are audible.” The figure he has conjured into a moment’s contact with his dramatic being has already gone. The manager feels some remorse that he had just bought a drama of a countryman of Voltaire. “The immortal one is no barbarian,” he mutters; finding some consolation at same time in the recollection of the observation of Albert Smith, that there is only one person of a lower grade than the call-boy at a theatre, and that is the author.

One of the curiosities of the dramatic art, and even the British world, in the nineteenth century, is that not one of its dramatic writers for the theatre has been hailed with universal respect and admiration by the intellectual professing to be guides. In the art of painting, and in music and works of imagination, as has been remarked before, glorious times have been in these days; but genius has passed over the stage and left it comparatively cold and barren. Had there been no Shakespeare, three centuries ago, the likelihood is, that, as with the Romans, the theatre would have fallen utterly and without a word about it in the regard of intelligent human beings; to occupy the place which a toy-shop or waxwork holds; a rendezvous for the entertainment of children and childish people, which it confessedly often largely is. This also is pregnant with meaning for us. The theatre would have gone without hope at all of the future; Shakespeare has kept it alive, partly with hope that, as he has been, there are possibilities for a living art in the future. France

could not have supported in Britain a continuous intellectual interest in the drama, through Molière and Hugo and other writers whose dramatic works are equal to prose fiction.

It would almost appear that England has lain down exhausted by its productions of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. That it is not their age simply that makes Shakespeare and Sheridan and Goldsmith venerated, is quite certain. We would find them antiquated if we could. We would turn from them, as, deeply under the mighty influence of Scott, of Dickens, of Thackeray and Eliot, we have wearied of Fielding and Richardson. But we cannot. Their genius has worked not for their age only but for our time. And nobody succeeds them. A voice here and there, as respects the Elizabethan only, exclaims of needful modifications of morals and art. Meantime Universities, Schools, crowds of literary men, publishers with editions innumerable of old plays, thrive as they come and go, and we see nothing of the classic art, with or without new forms.

I will tell you later on what I consider to be the chief reason why it happens the nineteenth century in this rich land of Great Britain has had no great dramatists, one I have never seen given but yet very obvious. Other influences of less importance affect the interests of the drama and infest it with a parasitical decay. A passion for upholstery pervades it; whereas the art dramatic is quite apart from gorgeous scenery dresses and furniture. You will see touring companies advertising, in order to increase the number of their audiences, that the mounting of their plays cost so many thousand pounds. What is this but an acknowledgment of that degradation of the drama which many deny. The dramatic art is in greatness before that of painting many say; yet can it be imagined of any artist that he would advertise that the frame of his picture was mounted at a certain cost. Who would seek fame and gain in his frames except the carver

and gilder? It seems to me only a confession of weakness to lay stress upon the cost of the furnishings. I have a suspicion it must be a poor play or a poor set of players who require to be bolstered up by so much costly display. "It is going with the times," answered a practical man to me, when I urged my views against this system. "The times have already changed," was my reply. And they have. Instead of £5000, a manager's boast should be that the mounting cost only £50. Then we might expect that a good play and good acting, and occasional change, were only resorted to. For my own part as regards the play which I am now to bring to light I should wish the cost on principle to be no more than £50, and that this should be known. London will have plenty of material for the times on loan, and this will do very well. I shall however be exacting in the acting. Then we might have Dumas' "four boards, a passion and a few characters," and hear no more nonsense to the effect that a play even equal to "the greatest acting play in the world"—*Othello*—would require to be reduced to prose, scenery, fine dresses, and common-place, to find audiences.

What is now wanted is a model or models for high-class drama; studying, writing and speaking of this art as painters do of their masters. Surely it is a simple thing to see that the son of the woolstapler of Stratford-on-Avon, who became the manager of the Blackfriars, having an eye to discern human character (and to depict it by means of dialogue and soliloquy) in vividness and thorough insight before any other dramatist who has ever written, is the first master to be followed. The real and most visible excellence of Shakespeare above other dramatic poets is that he drew characters; they have simply written verses. That, however, is not generally understood; and hence the numerous blank verse dramas of clever young gentlemen doomed to failure.

I say character "after Shakespeare" or nothing. It is the foundation and building up of all this dramatic genius

—character, not words. Excellent drawing of the human heart and mind and destiny must be imitated chiefly; not sound and fury.

The society of the dramatic age seems meagre and uninspiring. But the master lives more than ever; aye as the theatre has decayed, lively intelligence of him has risen into activity. "A time will perhaps come more favourable to true art than the present," writes Professor Dowden in his fine study of Shakespeare. And why is this favourable time not the present? It appears that "ideas" are too much "outstanding factors in history." "Thought must be obscurely present in instinctive action." That is to say, I suppose, that the mind of this day is dominated by particular ideas, and that character represented of this age, or even the past, has lost its individuality as it stands towards general humanity. The poet of the nineteenth century cannot, we are told, "disregard political theories and philosophies of history." I daresay not; but that is no reason why the poet should make his characters be imbued with the political theories and philosophies of history of his day. The drama is not for such material. Who would tolerate a new Prince of Denmark if his discourses on sorrow and destiny were concerned with his failure to accomplish a reform of the Church or an emigration scheme for a swarming population. The new Prince of Denmark, having the noble mind of the scholar, in like anguish in the nineteenth century, will not likely pant in Hamlet's way for revenge. But for all that an idea of like force may "tyrannically dominate him." The nineteenth century, and no age, stand in the way of intellectual and intelligent men finding the world too much for them; new consolations though they may find. The drama of *The Lord of the Isles*, which I am now to lay before you, is in its original conception mainly after *Othello*. A pair of lovers might be ensured of felicity if they were alone, and had not their place made brittle by the world, and they become the prey of villainy. Yet the dominant

mind of Lesled the hero offers a comparison for my present purpose. He has motive for revenge as Hamlet, nay has an immediate call to slay, even to save himself, and the idea that "tyrannises" over him is not that of the duty of revenge, but, with distaste for greedy strife and blood, the soft Christian precept of non-resistance to the evil pressing against him. That idea can appear in "instinctive action." The present time is really favourable to true art. It only requires the artists to arise in a depressed English soil; a soil not virginal, but surely not destitute of encouragement.

Who else could you set up as model for the highest modern dramatic art? German Grillparzer and his *Sappho*, with Byron as apostle. "Superb, sublime—I know him not, but ages will. 'Tis a high intellect," wrote the author of *Manfred* of *Sappho*. Carlyle's opinion is different. Would you have Norwegian Ibsen, the latest introduction? Or would you like Shelley's *Cenci* with his apostles of these days? Or Browning's *Strafford*? Or would you take—(for we have few of the star-created sons of the dramatic Muses)—the rebels from high art, the creators of wax figures, mechanically stirred to animated scenes; the whole with a mighty look, with great draperies, the heroine's to cost a fortune?

["Well with honest Jack Falstaff," said Shylock, I cry "God be thanked for these rebels; they offend none but the virtuous; I laud them, I praise them."]

The art of Shakespeare has been approved of by the universal acclaim of civilised humanity, and there is an end of the matter. His art is the remedial appliance which Carlyle said in 1829 medical men had been for twenty years seeking to discover, as they are now. Truly modern drama cannot be our proper model; not even that of France. "The dramatic stage has no longer its grand innings. Gratifications of the eye; cock and bull stories," writes the author of *Behind the Scenes of the Comedie Française*. I leave the English dramatists of the day

with expression of personal good-will to the critical judgments of Mr. George Moore and the *Scots Observer*. There is plenty of room for dramatists of the school of Will Shakespeare; while the others may wander at their own sweet will, so long as the Censor permits, the public applauds and commerce is satisfied.

Twenty-six years ago I too, humble correspondent, was prescribing for "The decline of the drama." Art is indeed long. Shylock, you were then "muling and puking in the nurse's arms." I had not long before been made alive to the legacies of the divine Shakespeare; and I prophesied that here was the mighty spring to nourish the race of dramatists. I, the year before, had witnessed in the Adelphi Theatre the representation of *The Dead Heart*. Webster moved with stately graces before the gay landscape of La Belle France, and my youthful blood thrilled a little with the fancy of a grand romantic drama. How near to Shakespeare might not this seem! Alas! the character was destitute of the signs of any intellectual birth. Even "the translation of meanings and ideas into optical symbolism" was not there to assist in keeping the story to the level my fancy sought. Passion, eloquence, poetry, character were not in it.

Twenty-two years passed away; and again I—even I—was prescribing Shakespeare as the dramatic model (see *National Review*, November 1885) for the more aspiring artists.

What came of this demand for dramatic authors after Shakespeare? Nothing in England. In the course of time out comes again *The Dead Heart* in the high temple of the serious Muse. There "the intellectual power of the country, the princes of art, literature and the drama, the great and mighty in place, in thought, and arms," salute each other and walk forward. Pity it was not to see a new Hamlet or a new Shylock. It is the actor without parts. The manager is doing his best with the appearance of romance in his selection of a stage-play.

["Sir Autocrat," burst out Lorenzo, "I was one of those princes, and must resent this. Ah! I perceive too you take advantage of the general darkness to run up your own candle above the house-tops and fancy we will take it for Jupiter."

"What went we out for to see? We did not know."

I accept the title of Autocrat. The French dramatists are the autocrats of the English theatres of to-day. Golden applause follows, without almost murmur, whatever views of life and nature they choose to give. The British dramatist—if he be after Shakespeare certainly—should have the same privilege. Without it, there is no fair start for the home producer; without it, how is the actor to have his part.]

Mme. Modjeska has, in some discussion in America, characterised the melodramatic class of play as the emotional, depending for expression upon the action; and Mr. Irving will put *The Dead Heart* no higher. The poetic play, she says, depends on thought and diction, she herself being a poetic actress. Her province would appear to be limited indeed if she is to favour the world with work not quite familiar to it. Is the theatre forced to exhibit only tableaux-vivants? And can there be great drama without words? "The time was wont that when the brains were out the man would die." No; there can be no character of intelligent life without speech, so far as the stage is concerned; and therefore the emotion of a figure little else than dumb can only interest children, not grown men and women who carry their intelligence about with them, and ought to be made to feel the difference between the emotions of a Hamlet and a dustman in an area.

Mr. Joseph Jefferson is at this subject too in his autobiography. He informs us that "a sympathetic story told in action rather than words" forms the successful stage-play; while he admits that character and dialogue assist a play. Mr. Jefferson is readily confuted in this

assertion by his own story. The sympathetic story of Rip Van Winkle seems to have been a failure until it was put up in proper words. Dundreary was painful even to the actor of the part till he found it assume the dignity of a character. Mr. Jefferson says that authors have not known where the strength of their own plays lay: equally actors do not always seem to be cognisant of the comparative values of the material with which they work. No successes of the theatre in modern days have surpassed Rip and Dundreary, impossible beings but quaint and eccentric stage characters, really owing little or nothing to the action. Nor does *Louis XI.*, a masterpiece of genius in the hands of Mr. Irving, gain a particle of interest from his fortunes. And so it is where other actors have been able to invest their part with curious originality; all the rest is forgotten. "A story told in action" is but a poor affair, so much depending upon whose story it is. It can only give a moderate amount of interest to the least intelligent where not elevated by means of character and excellent dialogue. What the vast majority of playgoers do prefer is character.

If a society comes to the front for the cultivation of the imagination and emotions, do you think it will tolerate each and all of the "great London successes" which go about the great towns for some years deluding some local critics and the idle section of the public. No! we shall get back again at the top to some higher standard of excellence. I see the craving for a more serious and substantial yet romantic drama which some managers, and even actors, may be the last to see, but which intelligent critics of the press do not fail to notice and call for! "Taste is aiming anew at the point of high tragedy," writes Mr. Thomas Hardy. "The stage-play of the future may be tragedy of a new and higher kind," writes Mr. Oswald Crawford. Do the patrons of theatres know that last year at Newcastle 750 persons in connection with the University Extension Scheme attended a course

of lectures on ancient tragedy ; applying to be allowed to study Greek instead of Latin for preliminary examination. Bravo 750 of Newcastle ! I feel an ecstasy in the sense of your existence. Do they know that the Women's Trade Union Provident League of London meet together to discuss Shakespeare and call for "masterpieces of modern dramatic literature." Bravo W. T. U. P. L. of L. ! What of the ripely cultured after that ?

Foreign dramatists only, it appears, will model at a time with some success after Shakespeare. In Russia, Ostrowsky, I am told, modelled his fairy drama the *Snowflake* after the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. France is alive to the excellence of the greatest of dramatic poets ; and M. Haraucourt now writes *Shylock* "d'après Shakespeare." M. Sardou also *Cleopatra*. Britain must not leave to Paris the foundation of the school of Shakespeare, if Russia lays a first stone.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, the hour has struck. The Pioneer has to clear away the obstructions that prevent the land of Shakespeare being laid open for the cultivation of the artists of England. The magic circle within which hitherto "none but he" dare enter has to be broken down. Who will acknowledge the gain, and know that the soil and the tillage are of his ? Men will ; men are about and around us who can discover the truth ; and a few have the courage of their convictions. It may appear to the comic school of the present that the age of high-class drama is gone ; that tragedy is off (see Mr. Wyndham in the *North American Review* for November). Yet I venture to say with confidence that were new tragedies of power represented by capable actors to be produced, the fabric of the stage would witness an instant transformation.

Mr. Saintsbury says that Dryden produced the last really fine example of English tragedy ; and Dryden did no doubt do so because he had such a sense of the greatness of Shakespeare's art ; threatening as he did to quit the stage in despair confronted with the drama of his

great predecessor. The author of *All for Love* seems to have despaired of his audiences too, as many do now; but he takes courage, and his courage becomes justified.

“Who would excel when few can make a test
Betwixt indifferent writing and the best?”

he exclaims; yet he goes on—

“Yet scattered here and there I some behold
Who can discover the tinsel from the gold.
To these he writes; and if by them allowed;
’Tis their prerogative to rule the crowd.”

And he produces *All for Love*; “professing to imitate the divine Shakespeare.” The success of the play was very great, we are assured. So that we have Dryden between us and Shakespeare; and Dryden was a dramatist against his will.

There is great attraction to Dryden; though I confess I do not find his dramas at all irresistible, including even *All for Love*. He could not I think comprehend the secret of the height and breadth of the Shakesperean art; he felt these, yet he was kept out by a “magic circle.” That magic circle is the line which draws within it varieties of human character intellectual and common. Dryden knew very well, what many writers in these days do not seem to appreciate, that Ben Jonson and others who were “taught art” by Shakespeare never exactly learned it. Dryden says of these writers what might be equally applied to most other play-work—

“Our ladies and our men now speak more wit
In conversation than those poets writ.”

Sensible people must think it a waste of time and money to visit the theatre to find the characters on the stage inferior in sentiment and wit and humour to the acquaintances of society. How ridiculous to go to the theatre and pay to find the dull-witted and the commonplace; quite poor amusement indeed to what may be discovered at the stage-door; and how absurd to except to Sheridan’s

plays because his characters are wittier than the people of society. We go to the theatre to rise above ourselves, not to be confirmed in the smallness of daily life. No dramatist accomplishes this end like Shakespeare. And Dryden and others have failed to get within the magic circle because they do not discover to us flesh and blood and brains of this high stamp. Novelists have discovered this in their easier art.

In the *National Review* of November 1885 I answered some objections then raised to Shakespeare as the master of the art for us now. No English author has gone to him; and in the absence of this new genius I am here still disposing of objections to my model. Just at this time Mr. Brander Matthews (in *Longman's Magazine* for October 1889) is in the ranks of the opponents of "the Shakesperean formula." It seems that is "futile." "The true dramatist makes his work conform to the physical conditions of the stage;" and in the days of Elizabeth with "half-timbered play-houses" the plays abound in murders and trials, in "councils and in battles," as the houses warranted "the noisy violence, the rushing eloquence and the fiery poesy, chief among the characteristics of the dramatic literature of that epoch." We are also informed by Mr. Matthews that "were Shakespeare alive now he would not construct a piece in mimicry of the Elizabethan dramatists, as Lord Tennyson chose to do in *Queen Mary*; he would use the most modern form; he would bend to his bidding every modern improvement—music, costume, scenery and lighting." "The true dramatist sees when a form is outworn." Mr. Matthews seems to me to give good enough advice to the playwright, but is not the dramatist first, who may work solely with four boards, two persons and a passion, as Dumas said. I have never yet seen from critic or dramatic author objections to the adoption of Shakespeare's methods which bear investigation. It may be gratifying to the self-complacency of the art circles of a period not particularly

bright in its forms to fold hands at the continued contemplation of a solitary master and cry his is an outworn form. That however does not go down with thinkers apart. Professor Butcher says that "The Greeks fixed unalterably the distinctive form of the drama and the artistic principle of its structure;" not Shakespeare but subsequent poets marring dramatic effects by improper methods. What outworn form can there, in this penetrative view, lie in the modern master who went by Aristotle and the Greek drama? Drama is drama, not an affair of a modern upholsterer's stock. Yet I fail to follow Mr. Matthews on his own ground. If Shakespeare had lived now he could not have made greater demands upon the stage than he has done—"music, costume, scenery and lighting." So great are his demands indeed that managers cannot supply them. So great are the necessities of Henry VIII. in these respects that it can scarcely be represented; and the late Mr. Charles Kean found its production almost ruinous. Shakespeare indeed felt himself bound by physical conditions, but Mr. Matthews only indicates the playwright's share. He did not think of one physical condition which might well hamper Shakespeare's genius getting full play. Women did not then act, and there cannot be a doubt that we owe something of the characterless forms of the majority of his women to this circumstance. Yet how greatly does his genius shine in the weakness of his position; making that even a glory.* Shakespeare indeed would not have imitated the Elizabethan dramatists; for they would not have lived now but for him; and they are not living now in the theatre, and certainly not much in men's breasts. Besides, in the melodramas of this era we have all the violence and murders in full force, but without the eloquence and always without the poesy. In the dying scenes of the stage imported from France—the dramas which are not

* Modern drama must depict women influenced by the stronger male mind, as well as discovering their newer and higher responsibilities.

of the outworn form — the almost murder of nature becomes revolting. I see little of this in the representations of Shakespeare where the poet's glamour clothes the naked act. These revolting melodramas Shakesperean art instead of perpetuating desires to sweep away. A stage strewn with bodies the master would now have avoided. May not this be accomplished? I have endeavoured something in that direction; as will be found at the close of my specimen of art.

Wherein consists the excellence of the "modern drama" not modelled on the "ancient" I have not had pointed out to me. Ibsen, I am only told, with "exceeding technical skill and abundant ethical vigour" has succeeded on the stage in considering with "awful moral force the doctrine of heredity." Ibsen's subjects may be treated of before youth and age, but not to my taste in the halls of recreation. There, tired and sorrowing humanity naturally hopes to be free for an hour or two, and to find even in serious story something of not altogether inglorious doom. If not altogether freed from the terrors which his physical destiny alone considered can produce, the alleviations of the art please and reconcile. Nobody in his sober senses wishes to restore outworn forms. What should be restored to the drama is intellect; with imagination and fancy, and spiritual and moral unity. It is no more a "fundamental and fatal defect" to model on the "ancient drama," than for an artist working after the divine form to copy the methods of the great sculptors of ancient Greece; working in marble, instead of wax figures with bright raiments. If the taste were not spurious we should turn from the flashy figures of modern French drama with as much distaste as the lover of art will fly from the deceptions of Madame Tussaud. With the spread of education we may be in hopes that the "outworn forms" of art which make man nobler will be produced once more, as against the tinsel of modern forms which degrade him—if he only knew it. The dying

drama indeed! It lives. And Shakespeare lives to cause a belief it will continue to develop and be seen in the theatre. A dramatist may "walk by the spirit" and not "by the flesh," and still have his dramatic excitements and theatrical displays. Lovers of mammon now laugh at "the theorist" who thinks of the spirit at all. The students of the Attic drama at Newcastle will have their flagellations for us all who offend. Ah! Ben Jonson's lines on the great model rise to the memory:

"Nature herself was proud of his designs,
And joy'd to wear the dressing of his lines."

Who can take such greatness as a model? Mr. Matthews will think only of the outward form! My object is to prove that the model may be imitated successfully in the greatness of his *designs*. The joy of nature in the dressing is another matter, and threatens, judging from the past, to be by comparison mild. A "solemn gladness" at the best may be worn in the eye of nature at the most successful of the school, but that is better than lamentation for an unworthiness.

M. Coquelin of the Comédie Française (in the *Century Magazine*, Oct. 1889) has now added his testimony to the "modern" spirit of Shakespeare; making a comparison of Molière with the Elizabethan. The Frenchman writes with charming vivacity; and his sentences are suggestive. He dismisses as a "'passing scamp' mine ancient" "honest Iago," whom an English commentator considers an intellectual creation next to Hamlet. Macready laboured over the character quite unnecessarily in his latter days; and even Professor Dowden calling him an "inscrutable mystery of iniquity" gives the character undue importance. M. Coquelin's contribution to Shakesperean analysis must be viewed with pleasure; for the dreamy German has hitherto been credited with all the Continental penetration into the soul of our greatest writer. Here we have no word, as with Mr. Matthews, of outworn

forms. What concerns M. Coquelin is that the poet dwelling in the temple of serenity sees life as in a dream ; in his middle period of life the sight is of desolation ; "the soul of the spectator is plunged into a kind of desolate annihilation with the unfortunate ;" Hamlet hears a story below the battlements ; Macbeth comes upon some hags in the wood ; and forthwith their glorious days are over and they hurry to doom. In the case of *Hamlet* the acute Frenchman's sentence suggests in a word the solution of the Hamlet mystery probably as accurately as Goethe's : that it is rather the stubborn resistance to a painful duty than an incapacity to perform it. He is not insane, but maddened and runs a-muck. "Thou canst not tell how ill all's here about my heart" tells all his pain at his own errors. Well, it is life this. In the moral and physical worlds the same tale is daily told ; in defiance of unthought-of laws, vexed by the accidents of life, come many tragedies ; what else are they than dreams. M. Coquelin adds, the dramatist draws from life no rule, for what rule can be found "used in a dream." But what method is there in this dream ! Religion, "the practised art of life," he may leave mostly to the Divine ; sufficient for the poet's or artist's purposes, the souls of the characters of the story are revealed whether they be good or bad. M. Coquelin does not suggest any modification on the Shakesperean art by modern philosophy in the dramatic poet. He simply turns away. M. Coquelin is particularly sorry about the desolate annihilation of Lear. Yet it is not desolate. Here the Frenchman's common sense is at fault, I think. Spirituality and sentiment are wanting to him in this instance. At last the foolish old king came to know true love in Cordelia ; the embodiment of the wealth of unspoken love. It is a mighty spiritual story ; and the death of the old man, not in distant ignorance, but taking to death, as to his bed, in heart-breaking loving-kindness about Cordelia and the Fool, moves us with not unhappy pity. A single quarter of

an hour of glorious awaking is really worth an age of stupidity to all save the never-breaking clods of the valley.

The latest attack on the Master of the dramatic art comes from the dramatic critic of a clever high-priced weekly London journal. He reminds me of quaint philosophic incisive Isaac Disraeli's reference to Rymer. Rymer said that *Othello* was "a bloody farce." This, says the author of the *Curiosities*, "conveys a sample of the judgment of the learned unblest with native susceptibility." The present-day criticism is to the effect that "regarded as human nature, or what is or was real," Shakespeare's creations "are the veriest hollow mockeries and artificial shams." Hamlet we are only to believe in as a drunk man, latterly suffering from delirium tremens. I thought that this writer was laughing in his sleeve at his readers. It appears however he is serious; and very likely he may represent the feeling of other persons. It would be painful indeed to think that he represents any more of his critical brethren; but as M. Coquelin thinks the poet saw life as in a dream, it is certainly possible that in the depths of honest belief there are a considerable number of intelligent men—they cannot have poetry and music in their souls—who coincide with this critic. If he is right there are many of us indeed insane. Let these critics however be at ease, and if they will moderate their wrath it may turn out that their deluded brethren and they are not so very far apart in their sentiments—no such identical characters were ever found living or will be found living as they do in the volume Shakespeare. The characters of Robertson's comedies have lived and do live as they are there. The one set of characters are creations, modelled after God's creatures; the others are the ordinary persons discernible by every body that walks the streets, but of no real account except to the incurious and the lower intelligences. I daresay the same critic will regard me as an intending perpetuator

of shams, with those sham admirers of the poet that Mr. James Payn has told us of. Now in answer to this I may as well give a little bit of personal experience. As a very young man, I never cared for poetry, and was nearly a quarter of a century in the world—knowing life well, chiefly through stirring and drudging at legal business—till I found Shakespeare. Sick in body and mind, the creations of this genius reconciled me to life. Would “hollow mockeries and artificial ‘shams’ have cured me”? I venture to say not. Some mighty power of this world was needed; but what? for men delighted not me, nor women either. I found it in these same “veriest hollow mockeries.” They refreshed, delighted, and strengthened—these creations with their feet on the solid ground and their spirits touched with ethereal bloom.

The autocrat is ascertaining the condition of dramatic criticism of the hour here and there. In ordinary circumstances this would be a strange, an imprudent and perhaps even impudent proceeding. But for all the ability and genius connected with things dramatic it is a dark story. The supreme light and master-critic is not shining. Democracy may have weakened him. But from whatever cause, we have not the luminary. Here we have Mr. Andrew Lang on *The Merchant of Venice* to the effect that “vain it is in this play to ask Shakespeare for a moral”—Mr. Lang who has recently given it as his opinion that most criticism is worthless. Professor Henry Morley’s book on English literature has another tale to tell of *The Merchant*.

To some great disposers of fame, of whom a little more anon, I do not appeal, but to those who have “the daintier sense,” and not I frankly confess to some critics I could name, whose opinions of the *Cenci* proclaim their due wisdom as put behind them. I find myself much in accord with many shortly expressed views; and think I am elaborating them—those belonging, too, to some members of Shakesperean Societies, mayhap the 750 of

Newcastle, and the members of the Women's Trade Union Provident League of London !

[Would you tell me, asked Antonio, if Coleridge did not write a play after the *Winter's Tale*, and if he did so, why you can succeed if he did not ? Coleridge says that the "form" of his *Zapolya* is in "humble imitation" of the *Tale*, and that *Zapolya* is a poem. Coleridge has probably succeeded in all that he ever intended to accomplish. If he thought of dramatic fame, failure was inevitable. Character, unity of moral design, and dramatic excitement are wanting. Moreover if Shakespeare had written only the more serious portion of *The Winter's Tale*, being the opening acts, he had not been remembered. The real life of the play lies in the second part of it. *Zapolya* is a kind of nightmare, in fine language. "Great nature had endowed him with her best gifts," and so on, but when we find that he exhibits a character "to be avenged on the beasts of ravine," we find the ordinary flash imagining of some odd off day of a poet. Coleridge was a great man and a poet. To be a dramatist required a will which he did not possess.

Dramas of design of which nature may be proud are not brought forth in this way. The adventures of persons, undistinguished except by the mere poetic utterances of the poet, are of little or no interest. I cannot repeat my tale too often, that unless the blank verse reveals pronounced character there is no following of Shakespeare.

In our day, historical dramas have been written with appearance of success only little inferior, in the serious interest, to the historical plays of Shakespeare. They are usually inferior in general character and are without humour : and what joy readers may have in the dressing of the lines can give them no real life.]

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I am fighting the cause of what you will call the "poetic drama," but what I choose to call the intellectual drama : there is the same stage action as in the ordinary play ; but high place, intel-

lectual life, moral significance, and the delights of verse are added to these.

[You excite in me already a restless curiosity, cried Antonio. And there was a general chorus to this effect, with some smile of incredulity. There is usually disappointment (not universal however) with original work. My work will be only "an approximation."]

Fighting under the banner of the mighty master as a model it is best to take one of his plays still on the boards of the theatre; it being kept in view that after all there are but a few of his plays in constant use on the stage; though of these it may be said now (as has been often done no doubt) that they sweep the field of the great passions. I must treat my subject with novel character and bearings. I have chosen *Othello*.

I daresay *Macbeth* stands out a model in construction for every high dramatist. It is a complete refutation of Mr. Arnold's complaint that only in Greek poetry is the poetical character of the action the first consideration; so much is it a drama of action, that it may be quite true, as Mr. Robert Buchanan has it in his attack on the "minor critics," that an offhand criticism might here complain of Transpontine melodrama and coincidences, and destitution of character. At the same time the personal character of *Macbeth* has subtle touches, if only recognisable by the fit and few; finely relieved as it is. *Macbeth* is the greatest piece of tragic art the world has yet known. We will not mind the vulgarity (which is sublimity even in the instance of these witches, according to Dowden), the coincidences and the apparent simplicity of character, if the mighty design and poetic grandeur of the action are equally visible, in any modern work. I, for one, am waiting anxiously for its coming. But *Othello* suggests more modern life; and it may even be matched for a "total impression," and the result give criticism more to think about; for if it be strictly true, as I am informed by one of the London theatrical critics, that they are

quite indisposed to start thinking about these things at all, more solid matter for thought at once is desirable for them ; a reason probably why Ibsen was welcome in some quarters.

Mr. Arnold says somewhere that the author of *Macbeth* was not a great artist, and not even an artist at all, proving his assertion by the quotation of two awkward lines ! What life's blood could have gone into *Merope* if this could be said by its author ? And what justification had he to urge his charge against the critics that the majority of them he verily thought did not believe there was such a thing as a total impression to be derived from a poem at all, fancying the term a commonplace of metaphysical criticism, if he himself could say this ?

The total impression is the highest aim of the true artist, though I find even poets writing in high places at this hour with uncertain like pens regarding this. The power to conceive rightly and to see rightly is, it is to be feared, not common. Alas, the masterstrokes that strike the penetrative vision, as they have arisen from the poet's deepest imaginings, how do they often fail even with the intelligent student ! To feel the force of detached passages, and pronounced phases of character, is quite inadequate, without feeling the true moral grandeur or significance of the entire representation. Dr. Johnson said that the tragic note of *Othello* is an unequal match. I feel that to be true. Yet Professor Dowden says that the central point of the play's spiritual import lies in the contrast between Iago and his victim. The Professor, I suppose the latest English authority, here mistakes the real essence of the tragedy. The pity that we extend to the tragic story springs from the black face of the Moor, and the great heart and simple soul of the barbarian, wedded to a quiet Venetian lady ; a strange wedding which some crafty Italian was likely enough to put soon into tragic story. I watch Iago with excited curiosity ; but do not contrast him with *Othello*. A student in early stages does so. Later on it

is sorrow over the tragic material. I take a high-class Review, now lying at my hand (Nov. 1889), and in the review of the literature of the month will be found advanced with hesitation, as a daring piece of criticism (not the author's own, but the late Professor Wilson's), that Laertes and his father's end are in possible contrast with Hamlet and his father's murder! A fatal-looking sign of unformed judgments, in the present state of dramatic criticism, is the approval of the *Cenci*. Criticism, including the essays of some dramatists themselves, is, as I have observed it, generally far ahead of the modern drama. But on this point of "the total impression" there is much uncertainty. I ask for a "total impression," and refer to the difficulty of reaching the right one.

An impression to be derived from the tragedy of Shakespeare, painful and even revolting in the bare facts of the story, is the alleviation. The tragic characters nestle more or less deeply in the bosoms of our profoundest sympathies. And they go to their doom feeling they are having that mercy and kindness, such as the misunderstood men and women of the common world do not have; for the poet's magic vision has not been by these latter. His art subdues the harsh reality; and the theatre becomes the reconciler.

The great tragic art is not simply "unpleasant," "melancholy," "sombre." When the tale is hollow and unconvincing it is all these, but this is not art. The emotional, who are strong enough to reflect, with the refinements of the artists, poet and actor, before them, discover in their hearts a subdued or tempered joy. The actor's part must be equally carried out to effect this soothing end. Yet how often do we read in the press of "consummate art" "truly painful to witness." Such art is not true art—"too frightfully accurate for art," may be, to quote Carlyle. We must go back to Charles Lamb for a reference to good taste on this point. For refinement is a first article in the creed of the Shakesperean drama. With susceptibility to the finer touches of the

stage, Lamb says of Palmer's acting in Joseph Surface that it counteracted every disagreeable impression to be received from the character. So he says too of John Kemble in tragedy—it was not “the painful eternal tormenting unappeasable vigilance—the ‘lidless dragon eyes’ of fashionable tragedy.” Why did Thackeray too fail to be moved at the “tragedy queens” he had seen departing from the world in “appropriate blank verse”? Yet a vagabond (he at same time said) with a corked face singing a negro melody drew tears from his eyes, and moved him to “happy pity!” Was it not that it was only made painful to watch the tragedy queens, while the familiar sorrows of some old “Uncle Ned,” were duly alleviated with a happy side in the sadness? Tragedy must have that too, not in a mere vulgar comic relief, but in the genius of the artist, or it is not art at all; and the actor must make that as apparent as the author.

With the aid of verse the actor can readily attain that alleviation of the pained reality; it is only in the vulgar prose melodrama that the tragedy queen should fail to find her effects over our emotions inferior to a representation of the sorrows of the negro. A negro melody is little removed from common life and requires little acting. Cheap are its effects. Tragedy requires a noble art equal to the design of the poet. No harsh torment is visible. Even gaiety is more in the air of the character. In Iago exuberance will be a leading feature of the greatest rascal of the stage. But the gaiety is not that of common life. The diction is a make-believe of common life; and so must the acting be, while both transcend it. Rant has no place in the representation. But neither has the speech of the drawing-room or the street. The last time I saw *Hamlet* partly performed I was in time to hear the Queen tell the manner of Ophelia's death. The “natural school” was then in vogue, and the lady delivered the lines much more tamely than she would have given a message to her dressmaker. These are lines to melt to

tears. As delivered, they were of less effect than the repetition of a nursery rhyme. When I last saw *Othello* Iago was a dull villain who would have deceived nobody. Older recollections bring me to a time of greater stage effects, over-stagey no doubt; but the airs of greater worlds were in it. I expect the ladies and gentlemen of the present theatres are really individually better educated than they were thirty or forty years ago. It is absolutely necessary that we have as soon as possible from among them a large body of trained actors in the great romantic drama, always at it, its masters, and never in the company of the commonplace. The impressions given and received will be of right tradition.

In the case even of the dark and villainous characters of tragedy, they must not be repulsive, not even here is the 'truly painful.' Art has nothing altogether despicable in the worst specimens. Intellect, misfortune, and comparisons with easier mortals, ensure no absolute want of sympathy even with murderers. In the case of the *Cenci* it is only with the hired assassins that I have any sympathy. But the *Cenci* is not art.

In *Macbeth*, the regicide's society has for keen insight charm enough in his susceptibilities towards the natural world; his love of it, from its common appearances to the marvellous, being apparent. I would like to have walked with this interesting man in the toils of fate, even at the time when—

"The crow
Makes wing to the rooky wood,
Good things of day begin to droop and drowse."

Alas he had done such a deed that the soothing voices of nature could not work for him. And I have seen as great a sinner weep for the sorrow of it in like circumstances. Do all actors act the part now to allow of this fancy? I differ with the criticism that regards *Macbeth* as filled with the powers of evil, and couples him with

Iago. He is no extraordinary man, except more imaginative, and should be thought of as a good-natured man caught deeply in the toils. His wife should know him best. He is full of the milk of human kindness, and where he would highly, that he would holily. The witches' prophecy, his wife's nagging, and the temptation at his hand, were too much for the naturally easy soul; not a "noble and loyal" one certainly. But is not this life? the life of the now. The murder of Duncan is no worse a crime, but less than those moral murders, ending in the death of their victims, brought about by other means than the dagger. Macbeth sinks, as such fallen men sink, into wretchedness. But we cannot fail to think of him when he was only the brave Thane, yet at his fireside starting at stories of the supernatural. Few heroes of tragedy or of life have the "energy of goodness" against all corruption. "Lead us not into temptation" may well be the prayer of the greatest. We are surrounded on all sides with the powers of evil; and Macbeth need not appear to us as the fiend incarnate or disappear before our eyes with other than "not unhappy pity." I would say no more of Macbeth than that "his soul never quite disappears into the blackness of darkness." One who has loved nature in any shape, even though Hecate can urge, at the last, "he loves for his own ends, not for you," will have our pity. The unappeasable vigilance of the angel whom Macduff taunted him with serving must not range over the stage for any heroes the creatures of art.

The art of the author of *Othello*, which not only reconciles us to the piece, but which withal arouses our sense of beauty, and excites our sympathy and pity, is precious to the penetrative student. What obliterates the coarse features and the jealous noisy rage of the Moor, and the stillness of the lady? These are forgotten in the great manly love and simplicity of character of the one, and the devotion of the other; both too the prey of a knave;

the fancy excited by the charms of verse ; and the soul appeased by the moral strength of their creator. Poetry is more than an ornament, for it refines to our senses the characters revealed in its uses. It searches out and exhibits in subtle touches the "sermons in stones," the "books in the running brooks," and the "good in everything." This play stands after all a monument of creative genius far more valuable in morals than the usually only credited one of depicting the evils of jealous passion, of an unequal match ; it lasts as a great revelation, by force of a great moral and refined power, of the charity which the Highest may be extending to His creatures the derided doers of evil.

The first principle of art, that it should depict beauty, seems scarcely to have been felt by dramatist except Shakespeare. What are the notions of almost all about plays beyond their being mere stories, set to suit the stage ? If a man of the culture of Dean Milman, writing in this century, had felt that a true drama demanded in its most tragic story some moral beauty how could he have written such a thing of sound and fury, signifying nothing, as *Fazio* ; and how can actors think they are engaged in art when they interpret such plays and worse ? Tragedies such as *Fazio* and the *Cenci* do not belong to art. The poetry lies all in the lines and on the surface. Where is here a single touch of the spiritual unities ? what single charm lies in them to soothe the troubled mind of the wearied or perplexed traveller of life ?

The grounds of the excellence of the Shakespearian art are, strangely, little understood except after long study. His methods are only then apparent. I am glad to find confirmed by the author of the *Pleasures of Hope* the existence of a strong element in the art of the Elizabethan of which I had seen no account previously taken. "In tragedy," says Campbell, "something more than pathos is required ; the very pain that attends our sympathy requires agreeable and romantic associa-

tions of the fancy to be blended with its poignancy. Whatever attaches ideas of importance and elevation to the object of pity forms a brightening and alluring medium to the imagination." This element of interest has not been understood in the modern play. The characters of almost all modern plays will not do for the Shakesperean school. That school takes its audience away from the vulgar paths. The meaning or design must come from a spiritual insight into some phase of manifold life, to which the parts are also subordinate. The leading characters are elevated in worldly consideration, generally original, intellectually existing, and represented apart from the merely outward fortunes, also made visible.

Whether the spiritual insight deals with one passion or another in human life is of no real consequence. Those who write they do not like dramas of revenge, or jealousy, or any other passion, simply write nonsense when the play is a work of art. Hamlet's bated revenge and Othello's active jealousy present no difference in themselves for the liking of the intelligent reader. Equally is tragic pathos of Aristotle's definition excited; awe and pity—pity for the fate we are witnessing, awe that such greatness should suffer defeat. And the execution of the higher dramatic conceptions proceeds for robust men and not for weaklings. To a confined and narrow mind, the incidents which give rise to much of the tragedy of *Othello* cause the critic to exclaim regarding it as Rymer, Pepys, and La Harpe did. But their opinions are utterly valueless. The existence of such opinions however is a continual menace to the cause of the greatest art, because they represent the large rebellious spirit of materialism which will condemn all but the visible forms of life and character. Thus, according to a dramatic critic, Shakespeare fails in a true characterisation because Iago is not a Venetian soldier and Richard an English duke. The answer to that is very obvious—as a Venetian soldier and an English duke they would have possessed no value for us. It is human

nature we want, presented through the deep curious eyes of philosophy, poetry, and art. And this the author of *Othello* has done for us.

It has been said that the problem of the modern theatre has been how not "to produce the illusion of a representation of life by poetry as in Shakespeare's time." Now the Shakesperean School desires to reintroduce the poetry as a heightening of the illusion. It recognises that such as the speech of Salisbury—

"To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,
To throw a perfume on the violet,"

is more pleasing to the audience than to see King John's crown, against a second ceremony with it, taken possession of *brevi manu*. The speech is grounded in experience of the eloquence and wit of exciting situations. Men are not then dumb, as some advocates of silent systems in the modern drama would have us believe.

"Art is happiness," says Gounod. "A work of imagination that fails to give us the joy of the spirit is of little value," writes Mr. Burroughs, an American critic. And to this end we need verse.

What then, asked Portia, is the secret of Shakespeare? Giving up his mind to his art. To Prospero it was all. To no man since the "surly sullen bell" told at Stratford that the greatest Englishman had "fled" has the dramatic art been so much. No one has lived and revelled in it as Prospero did. Yet he was a man of business and a theatre manager, and knew how to combine his delightful art with the necessities of the theatre and its profits, and so may we now if we put art first and not last. Many will laugh and smile incredulously at this, including artists and playwrights who are "vexed to death by the Gods," to quote M. Houssaye, "a careful observer" who "had already perceived the dawn of literature of the future that wants to relegate Homer to Scholiasts, shatter the statues of Angelo and burn the pictures

of Raphael." These are staggered at the greatness of Shakespeare; and "profess" that the days of art are over, when they are really only beginning.

"The choice makes the artist," wrote that wonderful creature Marie Bashkirtseff. We wonder how the blank verse dramas before us—say Scott's *Halidon Hill*, and *Glencoe* by Sir T. N. Talfourd—are so poor beside the Scotch tragedy of *Macbeth*. The first lesson, the choice of material, had not been learned; and yet character is not the feature of *Macbeth*. Scott felt the need of richness for his novels only. His drama was wholly the work of a rainy morning or two; as Shelley's *Cenci* was that of hot days on a house-top. There are no great dramas without a great and original choice of material. Neither that material nor the power to embody it effectually in the most difficult of arts comes on rainy mornings and house-tops. Unfortunately, as Mr. Saintsbury remarks, the field is very limited. Therefore are we entitled to be "after Shakespeare."

I did not appreciate the need for expressing an "important idea," with rich material, where there is a limited provision of it, when twenty-five years ago I purchased of Mr. Lacy of the Strand a copy of a sample of the then blank verse drama of the period. I felt indeed its entire feebleness compared with the works of the author of *Othello*. But that was mostly all. I never doubted a moment that any romantic story would suffice to follow after Shakespeare; that "if in the realistic tide there are some spirits who feel nature in the romantic way, they would not falsify her in expressing her so, and that only those falsify her who, without feeling romantic wise, set about being romantic and wearisomely reproduce the models of former ages," to quote the words of a Spanish writer. But with romantic fancies only, nothing can be accomplished in the dramatic art. Though romantic the writer must be, he must discover out of his material much more.

Yes indeed, the qualifications for setting out as a dramatist after the proposed Shakesperean School are pretty high; and a first test of him will be to feel and to explain the difference say between *Fazio* and *Macbeth*, both plays it may be said of ambition. The ripe artists can be but few. Plenty possess the natural genius. Upon this must follow application and time. Few possess the time. Hundreds start, perhaps thousands in the course of years, and never get half-way in the knowledge of what is required of them. They see enough of the "cold regard and poverty and scorn" lying before them, and the envy and contumely which would follow even half-accomplished adventures in this branch of the living poet's art, so that their hands are paralysed on the borders of a field of human culture where the fruits are out of all proportion small to the toil and hazards of the cultivator.

A belief, for a time, in immortality might seem necessary to pull through. A quarter of a century must be felt as a trifling period of probation. Then there are the depressing effects to be combated of no results appreciable to the naked eye; such results as painters may gratify themselves with on the way. Physic, I expect, must be found solely in the labour of covering sheets of paper with high imaginings, which somehow come to light the fires. No doubt life will, very much unsought, during this long period, provide the necessary tragic and comic experiences; but as the aspirant must, like Shakespeare (or what has been well said of him) obtain his great effects by writing in his best moments, wives, society, and recreative pleasures must have a second place. The disciple must have a mind capable of sustaining any defeat with equanimity. Of course he might find out when the years of his quarter of a century's prime are gone that the days for the harvest are unfavourable, or his work is not quite up to the required standard of excellence. There is something in chance.

There is a press of other matter going through the triumphal arches, and there is no room for the specimens of the stage art of action after the greatest of its professors. Granted that the author is not crushed in his first attempt by such a criticism as Johnson insisted giving to Boswell in the case of Hamilton of Bangour's poems—"Nothing that strikes one, nothing better than what you generally find, nothing to create a desire to read on;" then we hear again; the poet-dramatist meantime, alone, in the darkness, with his diamond, nobody but himself thinking about it as else than a piece of glass if they look at all. *Becket* at last pleases the best critics, and Lord Tennyson is elevated to a rank next to Shakespeare. But the theatre is dumb. Excitement must be obtained, even without words, which are discovered to be tedious. "The nobility, gentry and clergy, and the public generally," need another century, and your *Becket*, which is the result of fifty years' study, is played to occasional audiences consisting of the intelligent sections in the great towns; the author's remuneration being twenty pounds a year. You are elevated in your own imagination. To the British world you are a man of no account. Twenty pounds a year shows your genius to be impracticable. You may be conferring a benefit like Mozart, and like Mozart get a pauper's grave. This seems the situation.

What do I think the cause of the failure of the English drama to maintain anything like the high place which the great Elizabethan dramatist gave it? The unsuitable age? No, madam; no. With pain be it said, 'tis the unsuitable encouragement. The long and vast preparation needed drives all away when they see what it ends in. Think of the days and nights of many years before the characters and their story are more alive to you than the persons of your own house. If success is attained, beginning with approval of the fit though few, Burbadge and Hennings must be ready. But with performances of "the stars," the remuneration equal to

the pay of a fair domestic cook does not repay the losses of years when the artist was often at starving-point. The *Æschylus* and *Aristophanes* of 2500 years ago, and the brotherhood of "Eliza and our James," make a fine mental nourishment. But Providence allows this as recreation only.

Money has not been supposed to lie in the occupation of practising the art after Shakespeare. Do you not think that during the present century there have been men of genius who could have taken up the art where Shakespeare left it? There have been. If they lived long enough to feel what he had felt, and were artists, they could have worked well at his art if they had had a mind to it. But artists must live, and if artists find that the ready ore is acceptable and remunerated, and that to melt and hammer it into the small though beautiful ornament of the drama their time may go for nothing, what is to be expected? Men turn their backs on that art, not giving it a chance. They manage these things better in France no doubt. And we must manage here.

I see Mr. Matthews has written that never have been performers of greater skill than there are to-day, either for tragedy or comedy. I do not believe that this country is that wilderness of artistic desolation which the idolaters of the *Theatre Français* and *Madame Sarah Bernhardt* would have us think; though they will need training doubtless in the proper delivery of blank verse, after the long reigns of the flummery, cup-and-saucer, and "physically strong" schools. The time is ripe for a change to a course of high art. Why tremble, ladies and gentlemen, at some new departure? It is the life of business. The call of the times is that we all aim high. New and great parts are needed, especially for women; any early shortcomings of author or actor not to be treated rudely. Shakespeare has not provided so many complete passionate parts for women that ladies can afford to despise any new creation in tragedy. Editha, whom I am now to

present to you, may be played by many tragedy queens. She is neither Juliet nor Lady Macbeth; but those qualified for either or both of these parts may play this. And it has never been played; no comparisons can be made. The like of Mademoiselle Clarion, the "Queen of Carthage," stand forth. You remember she persuaded herself that the sublime actor should be a hero or heroine off the stage. Baron, the French Garrick, used to say that tragic actors should be nursed on the laps of queens. The Clarions and Barons are not certainly plentiful as blackberries. Strange as yet that Siddons should rise to the lips if we speak of our own tragedy queens. It is quite clear we cannot have them under the present conditions of the drama if continued. High art must first prevail on the stage; new and great parts for women must be created. Ladies speak the English language ten times the number since the days of Siddons, and are now ten times more assertive. The high position of Mademoiselle Champmeslé, supreme for a time as the Muse of the dramatic art, is worthy of many trials. To have a Madame de Sevigné say of such a one "*Elle est divine et sans rivale dans la passion*" creates a distinction to which the position of princesses is poor and tame. The drama must be taken seriously in England, as in France, and with a higher art.

[Jessica, who had an eye of sentiment and some humour, and a business air in the rest of her face, here interrupted. In whose laps of splendour are the tragic dramatists to be nursed? Why, madam, I suppose in that of Pharaoh's daughter. There will be many first-borns killed. The surviving fittest, the young prophet, son of Melpomene, must be found among the bulrushes. The whole tribe gets given over to destruction. The hand of the slayer is no doubt out at present; and the elders of the tribe are left alive, but suffering from nervous exhaustion; not a hundred miles away from Colney Hatch mayhap. These creatures are answering to demands after Boileau, and

are content to feel "the secret influence of heaven." The greatest tragedy-writer of the day will look drearily upon the literary journals of the hour, still, between 2000 and 3000 years after the events of the great contests of the Attic dramatists, discussing whether Euripides is entitled to form one of the great trio, and whether high art is entitled to resent his abandonment of the gods and demi-gods! And he may have to pass to the London theatres, with a copy of the history of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and seek consolation in finding on the stage, not his magnum opus, but only farces, dances, and dumb pantomimes, as in Rome for centuries succeeding Augustus. Ah! exclaims the saturnine poet, "the decline and fall of the British Empire!" (Laughter.)]

Professor Dowden, in concluding his chapter "On Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Age," remarks that in the nineteenth century, the poet's noble positivism must be supplemented with "an element not easy to describe or define." The Professor's "motley assemblage" of spiritual teachers are however, he says, supplying this. Individually I confess "spiritual life and well-being" have not been found in most of those "spiritual teachers," nor has "the scientific movement" supplied a substitute for their deficient effects. Many persons, among whom I number myself, have not found themselves beyond the main source of the great Elizabethan spiritual learning.

Taking account here in Scotland near the closing years of the nineteenth century, the dramatist who is concerned with the brief chronicle of men's deepest spirit will turn to few of the Professor's great men—to Coleridge, Shelley, Whitman. To Wordsworth and Browning, yes. To Carlyle perhaps the only one eagerly. Where then will he find sight of the spiritual food upon which men feed either their lives or their fancies. It was only the other day that I knew the vast and increasing interest taken by the most of people in books of the life and work of Jesus. I confess I fancied that new publications about the Chris-

tian religion were mostly born to fall still dead from the press. The contrary had been the fact. These have shown the greatest vitality; and obscure writers have published expensive volumes concerning Christ, which have circulated by tens of thousands. This is a remarkable fact; very far indeed, in its results, from being taken notice of by that art once considered to give some account of the form and pressure of the times. The drama then in these days in its highest forms will still partake of the spiritual lessons set down in old times. But how now of the flood of learning applied to these in this awakening era following the last three hundred years?

I have often read during the last quarter of a century that the Victorian drama should represent the victory of man, while the Elizabethan had represented his struggle, and the Greek the defeat. To believe in this advantage for our day "a hidden greatness of Christian life making no mere show in this age"—to quote Professor Bruce of Glasgow—might be considered needful in greater vital force than is imagined. The dramatist however goes not here to the fullest limits even of his beliefs.

In the case of Shakespeare's intellectual masterpiece *Hamlet*, though the poet places the story in a Christian age, Christianity has no active relations with its hero. It is a "rotten society," and this is reflected in the Prince's own want of an active spirit of goodness. Here, while the character, as in other instances, is not ruined by subjection to some dominant passion essentially anti-pathetic, but rather, as it appears at first sight, by the incapacity to yield to the proper demands for a speedy revenge which are also painful, no substitute fills the soul for a reconciliation. A torment of unrest by the calls of the world is unceasing. The scholar, for the poet had gone out of the Prince, must have known well the offer to the weary and heavy-laden. "The preservative against any definite form of sin—a strong abounding of spiritual life," he did not have.

Thinker, dreamer, as he was, he had no spirit of worship, and therefore, as Carlyle says, moral putrefaction would arise. He is demoralised. Here there is no victory, but darkness and mystery. In our age do we do better, though we know or profess to know better; and is a Hamlet an impossible high creation for an intellectual Christian? Would it arise in his conceptions from self-consciousness and experience of men? I fear so; though here I make no positive answer to that query. The powers of the artist's genius are limited. It is the elongation of a mood only, when a perfect revelation and solution are sought after. But Hamlet as a high type is of the past.

If men even accept Christ, according to the above-mentioned Professor, there is tragedy in so far as this world's joys are concerned. "The cross," he says—"not as a sign of mistake or failure"—was the "inevitable goal for all who were loyal to the kingdom and to righteousness." This then is the victory.

Tragedy of course arises from error; according to Aristotle and Shakespeare, the error of the man and not entirely of his enemy. The contrite and the broken heart will come only to the greatest with error.

The drama of my conception, lying before me, depicts a man in enjoyment of healthy robust Christian life, and hopes; and of whom much is accordingly required. He is caught in the toils of the world, but he remains true to his creed. No dominant passion, essentially overpowering, gains real hold of Lesled, Lord of the Isles. He is not unreasonably worldly from first to last. But he falls. Of course I am discussing his character and actions now, as any moral critic may. I may be challenged; but what I would say is, that temptation proved too much for Lesled, and that he was bound, feeling that he was in the service of higher things than uniting his life with the daughter of a wild chief, and bound to the world, to steer entirely clear of her. No doubt the lady proves to be doing her utmost, and successfully, to learn goodness;

but the command laid upon the spirit is inexorable. God and mammon cannot be served together. Lesled was not a saint, and in marrying, a suitable choice involved perhaps the whole question of his moral guilt or innocence.

The Thane, afterwards of Glamis and Cawdor, lover of nature, and even holy, would not have been a tragic hero, but for having married an unscrupulous, ambitious woman. *Lesled* is something of an earlier chapter of a similar history.

The temptation to renewal of his betrothal to Editha was of course enormous. Love, the getting of his own estates, and further power, were all for it. At the opening of the play, though we find Lesled in a condition of domestic and worldly loss worse than that of Hamlet, we find him in spirits. His burdens are light, bad as they are. He allows them no mastery. And the reasons are apparent. No sooner, however, does temptation come than the load of life presses on him. At once he sees the angry passions roused on him—probably to doom. It would have been selfishness, even cowardice, to have refused the situation, men will say. Those who take that view may. My own is, that no man or woman either should undertake worldly concerns so as to lose their own good spirits obtained in the great living worlds of nature and from the master-spirits unseen. Man is to love his neighbour only as himself. Lesled carries with him into his new life the fine aspirations he had gained in his free state. The results are fatal to his being. They could not thrive there, though through a fierce struggle live.

The intelligent student wrapt up in a sense of pity for the sufferings of the hero, with awe that such good intent and actings should suffer defeat, may well have a fear lest, being human, he fall in a like manner; unless indeed he considers that the hero is no wrong-doer at all, but a martyr. How venial seems Lesled's offence! Aristotle I take it, judges of the feelings called for in tragic pathos as in these previous sentences. And if so, the life in

Aristotle's day is proved by their language to be the life of our own. The scene, placed in the stormy era of the civil wars of Robert the Bruce, does not obscure to the moral observer that it tells also the story of his own day which has happened in the next street. Christianity may have been a living factor in the life, and that is punished for a false step, followed by a catastrophe which the man adopted as the issue of it. Verily it is a difficult world.

The "form and pressure" of a drama of the age of Bruce would be supposed to be different from this. But so would the play of *Hamlet* not please one who wished to have a history of the time. *Lesled* is not historical.

There is laid upon the dramatist, with our increasing acquaintance with the author of so many interesting creations, the necessity of entertaining with somewhat new and pronounced characters. Having now myself chosen the times of Robert the Bruce, every reader, I suppose, thinks that he will be treated to heroic, national and popular sentiments. But the hero of this drama is not only not "horribly stuffed with epithets" of patriotic valour, but he has scarcely a word on the subject. I claim as much originality for it as *Hamlet* may claim standing free of the quarrel of Claudius and Fortinbras. In time the more historical drama may be received with special favour.

A mere suggestion for some groundwork of the story is derived from Scott's poem. The plot proper is much the theme of *Othello*; an eternal theme which allows of hundreds of tragedies. By superficial critics it will be urged that I ought not to tell dramatically a story of unfortunate married relations because Shakespeare has done so often. This they urge with as much justice as one who informed me many years ago that I ought not to have written a sketch of a set of old lawyers and their clerks whom I knew, because Charles Lamb had written a sketch of some old lawyers and their clerks. To ensure popularity, writes an acute critic of the day, a poet should

do, as all successful authors have done from Shakespeare to Scott, make choice of argument from a story already familiar to a wide circle. No author would dare to appropriate the exact story of *Othello* ; but he may take the theme, and treat it with originality.

Lesled is a hero who may surprise. Think of him not in connection with *Othello*, but by way of contrast to *Hamlet*. Why does not Lesled soliloquise as *Hamlet* does? Think of it. It is enough to point out that as *Hamlet* undertakes the pagan burden of vengeance, Lesled undertakes the Christian burden of resisting the natural call for it. I imagine that the human nature of the past centuries still awaits depicting with freedom from the conventional trammels binding the imagination of succeeding times. Who that has read the letter to the Pope of Bernard de Linton, the Chancellor of Bruce, scholar, poet, churchman, warrior and statesman, but must feel he is in the presence of a man of great and original character.

The abstracted form of the drama as it is in Shakespeare is best suited for showing the human heart as it has dwelt on the earth ; and had the British nations possessed men of dramatic genius, or rather have shown some spirit in these years to encourage it properly, we now would have seen vividly some British peoples and passages of life deeply interesting. But somehow things go on mechanically and in sheep-treading fashion as before ; and instead of character, life and history, the people of these islands are still yearly treated to the unappeasable French mistress and her deluded husband. "Never was the theatre more degraded than at this moment," says a writer in the *Quarterly Review* (April 1890). Take the case of the second city of the Empire, as large as London in Dr. Johnson's time, the centre of scenes of so many stirring incidents in Scottish history and life. Only two melodramas are the result, as known to the theatres of that great city. Yet all I want to say more at present on

that point is that I have not neglected reference to the sacred isle—to Iona, where nearly five hundred years after the period of my play the greatest Englishman of the eighteenth century knelt with a rapt passion of reverence. In this land of Columba there could be in King Robert the Bruce's day men like Count Tolstoi or Professor Bruce or the *Quarterly* Reviewer to ask, as the latter does, "is there possible a resurrection of Christian principles now held by rote," and who will "resist not evil"? The author of *Hamlet* did not reproduce historical characters of the age of his story; and to *Lesled* I fancy I have also come with account of some human nature of other eras as well as his own.

Editha is one of those characters after a fashion, in which, according to Dr. Johnson (speaking of the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*), Shakespeare delighted. Ordinary lovers of his creations do not think of his women beyond the simple Desdemonas and Portias, heroines who are, according to Mr. Ruskin, and other chivalrous exponents of Shakespeare, "faultless, and conceived in the highest heroic type of humanity;" while the dramatist has no heroes. The Nurse in the story of the Montagues and Capulets is more in accordance with fact. The Nurse, at once loquacious and secret, obsequious and insolent, trusty and dishonest, pleases the experienced artist not the least. Hers is a fuller revelation of a woman's character than Desdemona's is. The wife of the Moor is a specimen of Shakesperean art where some concealment produces a large share of the sympathetic effect. This method Shakespeare adopts with most of his women. No call to "extenuate" in their case is more than hinted at, if that. Eastlake writes of art that "unpleasant forms" require to be partially concealed; and Shakespeare thrusts out of sight practically all the imperfections of the sex. We are not now at the age of chivalry; and we shall not "high falute." Editha too belongs somewhat to the composite character, as are the women of this world.

She is not a sketch of beauty, but intended for a woman revealed. It may become all the more irresistible as a portrait to honest minds, while I think it pleasing to reasonable ones. Many more human beings may find themselves depicted in sharp lines in Editha than they will in Lesled.

What did a woman of this sort see in the quiet joys of the poet and the student of the scrolls on eternal life? What did Desdemona see in Othello? Characters like these do not adapt themselves to the commonplace minds of the half-blind observers of human life and passion. Editha will have the profoundest sympathy of every fair mind. With her heredity and surroundings, her love was, with shortcomings, really brave, and her own efforts at higher things touching. I dislike much of what is written about "sympathetic" characters, because I find sympathy forfeited for the human frailties when it should be given. Of Hamlet the present-day criticism would commonly be on this point of sympathy as follows: "The Prince is presented to us as a scholar and soldier with a pressing duty to perform, but when we find this continually put off, and ruin ensues for himself and others, he soon forfeits all the sympathy aroused for him." This is as certain as night follows day; it not being seen that the artist calls for sympathy just on account of the failure to act. Think therefore well of Editha when she is seen to be very human and not an angel, if she fails to be quite angelic when you might wish to find her so. She suffered greatly from Lesled's creed, becoming now personally the victim of the rascal she honestly decreed to call for extinction. But perhaps our profoundest sympathies, both for her as for Lesled, arise out of their efforts, with their knowledge, to live up to a higher ideal. Hamlet and Ophelia passively retrograde in a rotten society; Lesled and Editha are seen at least struggling and advancing spiritually against the killing influence of an intense material activity.

I think Hazlitt says that Shakespeare at his plays was the metaphysician as soon as he was the poet. If my play excites curiosity, a comparison between Haig and Iago will be made. Possibly it may be said that Haig is intended for a Scottish Iago. Well, if it is so, there is originality quite subtle enough. Dramatists must trench upon each other. Here the real difference between characters superficially not unlike obviously justifies the school after Shakespeare. Hazlitt describes the essence of the character of Iago as "exuberance of spleen." Haig's may be described as the animation of selfishness. He delights not in rascality, either for its own sake or for revenge, but in the prospect of the fruit his actions will bear him. Hazlitt might possibly discover in Lesled "a splendid example of waste talents, so different from the rest of his countrymen." But in Haig he would have found the incarnation of talents enslaved to win the world; a marked contrast to Lesled, whose zeal is for practical discard of the greed and spoils of ambition and of the common world. Haig is a metaphysically equipped scoundrel. He is the man of this world who will read with interest "The Example of Christ" and pay readily for his copy, and that out of gain by other people's loss and ruin, promoted indirectly, as he can, by himself. He is not a Pharisee "imagining himself to be one of the most faithful friends of Jesus;" he only persuades himself that he need only be faithful to himself, that is, to his instincts; pass over religion, with looks at it, and be happy with the world. For his crooked means, it may be only the moral law can lay hold of him, nor will he fail to explain his conduct away even to himself. The immediate, common, and unclean lies of Iago are not his. He utters nothing, proposes nothing in his cogitations, for which he would not find approval, and he can at least go on without fear and self-condemnation. But he all the while is rousing black agents to do his desperate work, while he insists that the results are due to his skill. This is the most dangerous

of scoundrels. A poor revenge delights Iago. Wealth, power, victory, are the designs of Haig. We fear and detest him: he is in a sense not despicable, being clever, and even humorous. But when unmasked, he is seen to be a vile knave.

Enough now of the three leading characters. Some reflection upon the secondary character Heiskar may discover, beyond the artistic unity there is, a moral unity in the contrast of cupidity in the characters. If this were a melodrama probably the best name for it would be *Greed*, rather than *The Unsuitable Yoke*. We have a *Drink* drama; why not *Greed*? In my observation of the world drink has slain its thousands but greed its tens of thousands. So sensitive is Lesled apparently that he should not be enslaved by this passion in any form that he even at the outset is seen revolting from the lover's greed. Contrast in the varieties of this passion will be seen at the outset in the colloquy between Haig and Heiskar, when the meanness of the richer lord sets the bolder more generous rapacity of the poorer lawyer into some relief to his advantage.

The less preface to a story the better is a wise rule. But I am called to offer one, and to my present course of confession, by several considerations.

Five years ago a critic of high standing in London wrote of a play of mine not published: "Perused with profound admiration; but the author must be very sanguine if he thinks there are critics to analyse his play with all its poetry, philosophy, and imagery. Farces are only marketable."

Now as Iago cries: "By the faith of man I know my price; I am worth no worse a place" than these same farces.

It does not pay? No British writer from the days of Rowe till I make a start has, so far as I am aware, taken the great master for his model in the theatre. It does not pay? Shakespeare has paid as no other dramatist

has done or ever will do. He is playing and paying over all the civilised world. So will his school, with fair play.

A sceptic writes the following: "Blank verse dramatists have been long the butt of the comic journalists; yet curiously dramas of this kind still appear." This is as if an art critic of the brush wrote: "Poetic treatment of subject has long been the butt of the frequenters of the Academy; but curiously enough, painters are still found looking at nature with their own eyes, and not adopting the true positive methods of the sun, *i.e.*, using the photograph; for what can be truer?" Mr. Boucicault knows the drama well; and he has just given his views in New York strongly to this effect, that "since 1850 not a single work of any enduring life has been added to dramatic literature," generally because of "the agency of the press." I doubt this responsibility of the press; while the reviews would urge they had nothing to review. Yet has the drama in Britain fallen into decrepitude along with, so some critics say, a good portion of the audiences, three out of whom are, it seems, required to make one of the audience of a French theatre. At my elbow lies a leading article in the principal journal of Edinburgh vainly trying to reduce to impotence the dramatic genius of a neighbour of my own, who is now at middle life and had a play in blank verse produced with acceptance, composed when he was only nineteen years of age. An active patriotically-spirited man, his ambition has been to see in Scottish theatres some tales of his country's history. The human folly does not certainly lie with him. His work is not in the fashion! So this journal must jeer too—till high art succeeds.

This kind of treatment and much worse call forth the dramatic author to speak in no uncertain voice, or his art would seem to be crushed out of existence. No reviewer, quarterly or otherwise, discourses of the eternal principles of the art, and art therefore must cry in a loud voice, through mostly the artificer himself, according to his

lights. I do not blame the press. I have given it attention, and find the language of anxious, honest, and fearless critics, but with voices intermittent. The majority of the press being with high-class drama, which necessarily finds a mighty aid in the employment of verse—used in a manner approvable to common sense—the depression cannot long exist if in a single instance there is a reasonable triumph of a specimen of the tragic art. My own belief is that during the last five years the public taste has really largely advanced and that it welcomes serious and entertaining work. And a blow at the general scepticism is what is needed, and may not be far off.

An author has to argue out the reasons for his dramatic existence, and push forward the consideration of his strong points for favour, as in Dryden's day. It is lamentable it should be so. Let me here give an abstract of the argument of my play, and then compare my material with the melodrama of the hour. The two great chiefs in the extreme west of Scotland in the beginning of the fourteenth century were the Lords of the Isles and the Macdougals of Lorn. During the wars of Bruce, both he and Edward desired the alliance of both these chiefs. At the opening of the drama, Lesled is represented to be the young Lord of the Isles, but dispossessed by a forger, Lord Heiskar, widower of the late Countess Ina of the Isles; Editha, a young lady, is in possession of Lorn. The union of these powerful families is desired both by Edward and Bruce; the latter however being supposed utterly crushed and even dead. Lesled and Editha had two years before been betrothed, but in fear of losing her estates the match was broken off, and she lived during that period in London. She returns, the ally of King Edward; Lesled, as might be supposed, still on the side of Bruce, from the espousal of whose cause however she now might apprehend no danger. Her return is facilitated by a ruse that she will marry Heiskar. But a kinsman of Lesled, Haig, a sheriff,

having discovered, for his own purposes, to the English governor, D'Argentine, that the alleged forgery of Heiskar is conclusive; and Editha having also discovered to the Englishman her unalterable devotion to Lesled; D'Argentine agrees to her marriage with Lesled; he having a good opinion of that young nobleman's peaceful character, and thinking Bruce's cause sunk for ever. This fair show of excellent intent is however upset by several circumstances. Bruce is again in powerful array; and Haig, taking advantage of the peace-loving and most merciful Lesled, who is sick to death of bloodshed, doggedly pursues a process of upsetting the conjugal life of the pair, in order to his own gain. At the close of the first act, we find the pair under great difficulty, and, with misgiving on the part of Lesled, rebetrothed. Haig obtains a lady, unwittingly to her, to play a part which shall arouse the jealousy of Editha; and at the close of the second act the marriage of the pair is carried through only after having been almost stopped and both of them nearly prisoners. The seeds are laid by Haig for a thorough rising of the wild temper of Editha against her innocent husband; she struggling grandly with fate; and as he is to start for Bruce, she, deputy of D'Argentine in his absence, along with Haig as sheriff, orders her husband's arrest. Haig deceives her, and carries Lesled off to a distant dungeon, where in the manner peculiar to that metaphysical scoundrel he causes the hero to face death. Now this would make a melodrama. It will be seen I have exciting situations throughout, and at the end of each act. But I rely on character, moral unity, and diction, as well as plot.

The subject of the theatre as a mercantile speculation is of course intimately connected with that of the feasibility of promoting the dramatic art. The principles of success in the theatre are well understood, and art must conform to these, or financial failure is the result. Now in Aristotle's time, in Shakespeare's, and at present, the mass

of mankind able to pay for admission are interested mostly in the fortunes and particularly the misfortunes of the great. Audiences, as Aristotle says, in the case of serious drama, must be excited to admiration, pity, or terror. Admiration, pity, and terror are difficult to excite for obscure, mean, or commonplace persons, the characters for the most part of ordinary plays. Only the acting can carry them off. Of course if people all desire only to have what is called fun there is an end of drama. But the mass of people, especially women, do not care for so-called fun, and they are deeply interested in pathetic story. The art of the dramatist then must excite. It must be intelligible, it must deeply interest, and not degenerate beyond a few moments into any appearance of dullness. It is due then to an audience composed of every variety of intelligence that each one of it should hear and see something appreciable. All this includes the material for Hugo's three classes in an audience: plot, action, and situation for the crowd; passion and emotion for women; and character for thinkers. And it seems very clear that in an age of intelligence like the present those plays concerning high personages which contain the common material of story and action for the illiterate, and at same time provide subtlety of character and excellence of general design and diction for the intelligent, ought to bring the largest audiences. A cheap excitement of admiration, pity, or terror, such as a common melodrama aims at, will fail with the numerous persons possessed of some taste. The combination I have referred to is the thing. Shakespéare, as everybody knows, has succeeded best in this. Professor Minto says that Massinger would make an excellent model for the dramatist if modern audiences did not go to the theatre to be interested against their will. I cannot well accept this theory of the decayed mental condition of playgoers. The intelligent go usually dully, expecting little or nothing, but out of habit as of old, when they were usually as much disappointed as now.

Moreover I cannot accept Massinger as a model under any conditions. I accept only Shakespeare. Yet Shakespeare, if we are to believe some critics, is found dull in the great cities. The truth mainly is that he is exhausted there. That explanation curiously is never given for want of audiences. Those who charge Shakespeare on his merits as dull to modern audiences do so chiefly on these grounds, —that he has long speeches; that his characters are intellectual and not presented at the low level of common life; are aristocratic and not of the familiar democratic and domestic patterns which people know best. They forget the dull and often lengthy dialogue of melodrama and domestic story. They say that the humours of a rustic postman or a costermonger are more entertaining than the love of Romeo or the wit of Mercutio. This is not my experience of a general audience. All the women and half the men prefer Romeo and Mercutio, even although they do not follow or enjoy their entire speeches. They never find low life so pleasant to watch as high, and they do not weary of fine language. The class of playgoers, and in quite a minority, who prefer the buttermilk to the nobleman, is the class in life above the retail tradesman, and not much a patron of the theatre, who like to look down on the class beneath them. I am therefore for adhering not to mere antiquity, but to the principles of art which have commended themselves to all audiences from the beginning of intellectual history, and must do so still when they are really conformed to. Admiration, sympathy, or pity and terror are excited best by the not only pathetic, but by the pathetic heightened by imagination under the influence of the character, the verse, the acting, all raised beyond ordinary life. Could *Macbeth* have been pronounced a matchless tragedy to excite terror for all audiences, intellectual and illiterate, if the regicide had been a farmer, and treated too as a farmer, and be life-like according to the views of the critic I here in another part refer to? Let this one illustra-

tion suffice. These principles handed down from Aristotle are everlasting; they are the key to success artistic and mercantile; and what managers, actors, and audiences have to do when plays are laid before them is to see that they get plays in which our admiration, our pity, or our terror, or it may be all three, are excited. If the author only excites admiration for his fine verses, the play is a failure. If refined sensibilities, in two hours, with the aid of actors of sufficient genius, find neither admiration nor pity nor terror appreciably aroused by the action, it is no play at all.

And who am I that I should set up as the founder of a Shakesperean School of drama?

I am a champion of the repressed and obscure but enthusiastic and high-aiming spirits, adventuring long in an art the greatest and the most difficult, yet the most discouraged and the least understood.

Well, the whole tribe of English dramatists, standing on each other's shoulders, have just been measured by an esteemed London critic, and they do not, it seems, reach to the elbow of M. Meilhac or the waist of M. Dumas. What of that? With characters somewhat satisfying to Aristotle and Shakespeare; moving to the methods of dramatic action, while holding up the mirror, and showing the form and pressure of the man, something of "the wonted pace" after the deeper issues of life, the new English school must propose to reach to the head of M. Meilhac. Think of that, ladies and gentlemen, what courage, nay arrogance, vanity—to the head of a French dramatist! The story of the gamekeeper and his mistress, the roué and his protégée is to be passed over. Observation, wit, pathos, passion may be with *Margot*. Importance and elevation as well, rest in the drama "after Shakespeare." These form in no French play I ever saw performed in Britain "a brightening and alluring medium to the imagination." There is "elevation" in the drama after Shakespeare, or there is nought. Surely, the con-

ceptions of *Lesled* may compare with those of *Frou-frou* and *Fedora*. "Ah! but my friend"—I waved Shylock down.

Yes, I was going to say there is a dignity and passion as well as stage-craft about some French pieces which go far to make them great. They are great stage-plays; very different from London melodramas annually coming round; one of which I visited the other night at the second act, and found twenty minutes spent depicting an altercation between a cabman and a half-drunk fare. As this was a scene I would not wait for on the streets after I was ten years of age, it is not likely I cared to pay to see it in the theatre. Neither importance nor elevation exist with these melodramas. In the case of Sardou we have importance but scarcely elevation. *Theodora* is his latest drama I have seen, and I would characterise it as a great stage-play, but it is neither intellectual nor elevated. The parts and the design do not agree to a representation of man's life; nor do the characters of the drama really stand in the regions of romance and poetry.. *Theodora* herself and her lover partake of the latter; but the scenes between them, especially in the absence of *verse*, with difficulty at times rise beyond commonplace. The accomplished Member for Aberdeen, Mr. James Bryce, after he had seen the piece in Paris on its first production, said he felt the need of verse to raise it. They can manage verse in France too; though not here, unless first appearing there. "Last night's audience at the Shaftesbury," writes a critic, "was swayed to exaltation by the poetry of Coppée."

As partly a historical drama, I would not object to the play on account of *Theodora's* immorality, though this sinks the work; but it is in vain to raise it above the foulness of common life without the poet's hand. Nothing rises to the elevation such a hand gives to Cleopatra's love-making. One thinks only of the spiritual side of love when we listen to the Egyptian queen reproaching Antony:

"No going then ;
Eternity was in our lips and eyes ;
Bliss in our brow's bent ; none our parts so poor,
But was a race of heaven ! "

I daresay little thought is given anywhere to make comparisons between the methods of these French dramas of "importance" and "the important and elevated" dramas of Shakesperean method. As I am putting forward strong claims for a new British School after Shakespeare, with which I propose to startle at least Mr. Saintsbury, who remarks in his fine article on the drama in Chambers's new *Encyclopædia*, that as Shakespeare has continued to be acted, he "has trained actors without producing dramatists," let me add some words on this head, of what the difference in value consists. Shakesperean methods find the spirit. Desdemona loves Othello as the brave suffering soldier ; Editha loves Lesled as the bereft solitary chief, worshipping heaven, with his lute, on the lonely rocks of Skye ; Theodora falls in love with the Greek for no other reason apparent than that he was a man. Othello is a noble soul, with a vulnerable spot through which hard fate strikes him ; Lesled is meek and loving, and has won the earth, till a natural temptation brings on his loss. Justinian, in Sardou's play, shows us nobody at all but an ordinary schemer for fortune and self-preservation. The subordinate characters in the Shakesperean plays tell something of the moral significance of the piece, or strike a note of strange or alleviating contrast. The subordinate characters in *Theodora* only carry through the action of the story.

"Hold," says Professor Dowden, "ourselves strenuously at the Shakesperean standpoint, and view the universe from thence. We shall afterwards go our way, as seems best ; bearing with us Shakespeare's gift." Be it known unto all men by these presents that for the crushed worms of the English drama there is demanded the same license as is accorded to Shakespeare, and also to the French dramatists

in the selection of material and methods of treatment. Shakespeare, Dumas, Meilhac, and Sardou may "steal a horse" and are accepted without cavil. The London dramatists, including Miss Annie Irish (the latest victim to common-sense criticism), are narrowly watched, and dare not "look over the wall." They have very strict rules applied in testing the truth of their motives. They should have the same license. Audiences may no doubt say that, carried away by the greatness of the character and diction in the first named, and the wit, observation, and ingenuity of the other, they have overlooked weaknesses in detail. But equal justice is demanded where they are on an equality with the greater dramatists. Common-sense would have sent the tragedy of *Othello* to the winds.

How easy to give a wrong interpretation of the story by seeing only weakness in the secondary details. How easy to mislead, too, in the case of other dramatists, with a story of a jealous spouse, by urging that as Shakespeare has already treated well the passion of jealousy, therefore is their material wanted no more. That is certain to be urged. The careless public would believe this to be sound criticism. Neither remember that for nearly half a century the French dramatists have dealt almost exclusively with the material of illicit love, and as a new sample comes out it is made equally welcome as hitherto. What is to be said for that? That is France, and France knows what is possible in drama. Now in my humble opinion the material of *Othello* is superior in many respects to that so well-pleasing tale to the French dramatists. It is cleaner, and can be brought forward with better moral ends. Yet the stage of England takes no heed of this in any proper way, while it is the very place to deal with this phase of life after a manner due to the national temper for solidity. As a lawyer, from professional experience—and yet it needs none, for the newspapers teem with the tale—this subject is the first I would adopt. Yet a hundred pens will be ready to

cry out, "A drama in blank verse of an unsuitable match and jealousy? The fool! Shakespeare has done it, and for all." A hundred dramas may yet use the story and the passion, and successfully and advantageously to society, if originality is not crushed. A drama may give an original treatment and yet receive some inspiration from the original story of "Desdimona" and the great *Othello*.

Have I (asked Gobbo) who proposed "to engage the intellectual penetration of a Goethe," as well as provide at same time entertainment for the gallery, made sure that I am able to amuse the ordinary playgoer? My dear Gobbo, it is so set down in my tablets. I am well aware that the necessity of the school is not only to satisfy not over-exacting philosophers, poets, and divines, but the ordinary playgoer. Well, *Lesled* is a bit of a variety show, as *Hamlet* is. *Hamlet* has ghosts and fights, and plays and singing-maids, and grave-digging and funerals. *Lesled*, with its Christian hero, has unearthed hags and fights, and dances and singing-maids, marriage-bells, funeral-bells, jolly friars, if sombre abbot and abbess. The lively intelligent playgoer who pretends to no philosophy or poetry cannot well quarrel with *Lesled*. Yes, before this event I have been before theatre audiences. I had a "variety entertainment" play, as the one or two critical gentlemen of the press of the metropolis where I produced it informed me it was. I knew the great works of the Manager of the Blackfriars too well to go before an audience without variety, and I believe the audience of a fortnight, during which the play was arranged to run, had their delights. There is certainly not much credit to be derived from bringing out an ordinary play. But it had to be done.

A critic has urged of plays that a first opinion is not very commonly the last. This may be most applicable to uncommon plays. Mr. Matthews in the *New York Mirror* writes of the theatrical, as opposed to the literary critic, that "he is acerb, not to say acid," never praising

“unless he has to do so because of overwhelming success.” I think he often only requires to take more time and pains, as do authors, actors, and audiences. But the observation of this clever critic will at least make the most ambitious author very cautious. I will favour you with the criticism on *Lesled* which would appear as written by the youths of Edinburgh who attend the theatres for its one or two journals, and whose dramatic memories extend back a period of five years, provided the author meekly laid his play before an audience there for the first time. An “overwhelming” first night’s success demands almost “sublime” acting. Here it is: “Our author has given us the tragedy of the marriage certificate. Shakespeare having been once blamed for having in *Othello* made the tragic note arrive from the loss of a pocket-handkerchief, this writer must needs, as is usual, copy the faults of his great model and appropriate his weaknesses. A crack-brained hero and a mad heroine move about the stage for nearly three hours; and all is over after some poisonous drops.” I would not be able to write *Lesled*, as it is, without knowing my duty to myself and to the art better than produce the play in that way. Caution and somewhat slow paces on slippery ground are needed.

After this so-called criticism was written, I read the local notice of *Theodora*; the play of the greatest dramatist now continuously writing for the theatre. It is as follows: “To reproduce on the modern stage the spirit of the ancient world is admittedly difficult. In *Theodora* . . . the dignity and classical tone which are associated with the old world is conspicuous by its absence . . . a framework for the display of tragic passion of the melodramatic mind. The Emperor is . . . a jealous Englishman. The Empress . . . is nothing but the virago of modern melodrama. The first hour of the evening is wasted with preliminary matter which simply depresses the mind.” And this is all of one of the greatest plays of

modern days, for which I was very thankful and enjoyed amid the waste of dreary commonplace. So far as the Scottish metropolis is concerned, this justifies the observations of Mr. Matthews. In London the critics are more generous to the productions of the managers I understand, and this half-truth method of criticism would not be tolerated there. What is required from the critic is the total impression, not to be extracted grudgingly. Here he says it was "the suggestion of a power which somehow failed to fulfil its promise." Now all this gives a wrong impression to the public. What hopes can be entertained of just and generous treatment for obscure if ambitious dramatic writers if the most famous of dramatists is so received in cold blood. A playwright "after" the Master might naturally be thought to turn away dissatisfied rather than the clever critic of an evening journal circulating—well, not rigidly in university circles. But I was satisfied that I had got more than I expected. I was pleased to be away from cabmen, distressed operatives, burglars, and waiting-maids, the staple persons in city life of stage reproduction.

It is easy to write sentences like the above, not written in spleen either, but according to the young man's lights

"Look at the picture as long as I have looked at it," said Monticelli the painter to a callous critic, who pronounced his pictures incomprehensible, "and then tell me what you think of it." Let impatient hearers at the theatre's highest efforts remember this story of the artist.

In conclusion, I may be allowed to add that the subject of Shakespeare's art, and the dramatic art generally, demand a national consideration. England proves herself unworthy of the greatest of her men if she does not provide a house where his best works can be seen in reasonable succession to the highest advantage at all times, and which at same time is a school for training powerful actors, and calculated to stimulate genius to produce original works after his art. How absurd that Russia and France

should seem engaged in the trial, and not a word visible in this form in London. "Shylock after Shakespeare," successful at the Odéon; French melodrama at most of the chief theatres in London! A strange commentary this! I fancy *Becket* is due partly to a study of *Henry VIII.*, and *Becket* would have been produced at its publication had we an "English Theatre." If the public generally demands more stirring material than *Becket*, and does not get it, it is because the dramatic art has not been under any leading direction. No voice warms it, or points vigorously the way it should go. It is of no account to the State. Why £70,000 should be paid by the State for an old painting, and millions of money also so provided partly in planning wall-papers and carpets, and yet in the greatest of the arts the nation allows nothing, defy explanation. Why in all other arts the nation heaps honours and rewards upon their professors, and leaves this unrecognised, it would be hard to discover. A painter whose works are distributed mostly in the galleries of a few wealthy men is made a baronet; great actors, who have entertained millions with works of genius, might receive the honours of knighthood surely. Music even is respectably officially patronised; but the art of Shakespeare—it is nowhere.

Without the aid of the State, a few actors, actresses, and authors, bound to promote a drama of "importance and elevation," after the best principles of art, might set agoing a British Theatre, and keep it open at times during the year so long as there were supplies of plays and pays. An afternoon theatre would probably be most desirable. They will not be afraid to begin away from modern British commonplace and high French sensation? It is something to be pioneers in the resuscitation of the greatest of the arts—if we can be.

The recreations of the people through the theatre have more bearing on the national life than their attendance in picture-galleries; and the institution of a Royal Aca-

demy of the Dramatic Art is only a matter of time. Why not now? In connection with it would be the theatre, lectures, and general teaching.

Ladies and gentlemen, members of the Melpomene Dramatic Club, I am done. You have asked me to address you on the subject of the dramatic art, and of my own work as a specimen of the school I desire to see in vogue, viz., Shakesperean importance and elevation in character and design, with as much more attention as possible to plot and situation. Mine own familiar friend near me whispers of a conceited air about my address; but mine own familiar friend has not heard the play, and the play is the thing. Ah! well, I suppose authors of plays, as well as actors, especially those who

“ Fetch their life and being
From men of royal siege,”

are apt to wear great airs. Never mind us. It is, after all, our only real compensation for hard, generally ill-requited, and often derided toils. But let my language be carefully examined, and I cannot be accused, I think, either of boasting, or myself disparaging too absolutely the current British drama. It was only last night that I witnessed a newest specimen of it—*The Middleman*—which would reflect credit upon the theatre of any nation, and is not surpassed in the presentation of interesting character, and a powerful story of the day, touched with a moralist's hand, by any new drama, French, German, or English, that I have seen for years.

Yet how writes our disinterested local critic of this fine play, which he admits is interesting to the audience as it glides into a one-character play of tragic pathos:—“The plot is tedious, the action sluggish, the dialogue crude, and the comic scenes irritating.” Applaud me for my courage rather than mock me for my conceit, when we find only exacting and callous commentators whom nothing in human power can please. I ask you to think I can still

take some delight in what is not my own preferred form of art. I hope I have no prejudices, while I prefer the "important and elevated" to the domestic.

As a new professor, who must make comparisons, and in an art where his productions are, in the words of the journalists of the day, "tossed from pillar to post," it is not likely such a one will be altogether humble and retired if he has the chance to make his voice heard. All artists doubtless have a struggle with an indifferent public and incredulous professionals, but a dramatist after the Shakesperean school has to announce himself, at present at all events. When he finds Russian and Frenchman inspired by the great master of the English school, and not a Briton in the list except himself, he is apt to have an exaggerated conception of the importance of his work ; when confusion has reigned as to the true principles of the art—as with *Vortigern*, *Fazio*, and *Halidon Hill*—and reigns still—as with the *Cenci* be-praised, and *As You Like It*, and *Othello* be-rated, the certain hand of the disciple of Aristotle and Shakespeare will not unlikely play the autocrat.

"This autocratic kind of an author's consultation with the players," said Shylock, "leaves little for them to do."

My dear Shylock, it leaves them a great deal to do. I believe entirely in the theatre as the edifice of the art. After I have read my play to the company, you may not wish, especially with the ineffectiveness of the reading, to hazard a complete judgment, but you may easily do so of its points as an acting play. Beyond that should rest a good deal more. If it is an affair patched up for mere situations, I would not well be here ; and for the artistic entity, such as it is, you had better wait till you find the play in print. That judgment will take time. The visitors at the Café de Procope discussing the merits of *Semiramis*, in the presence of the disguised author, could decide nothing of "a poem won from the empyrean," but they

would not be "altogether inadequate," as Carlyle says they were. Surely they were judges of its stage effects. "Ah! there again," cried my honest censor.

Conceited? Well, let us have more of this. "Worms have been known to turn." "They can't bite, and they can't sting, but I suppose it comforts them to deliver their own souls," writes the "Country Parson" in his "Trials." The trials of the country parson are nothing to those of the dramatic author. When the dramatic author raises himself out of the gutter and issues proclamations as an autocrat, you may be sure he plays Nero and Dionysius pretty fairly.

He may proclaim himself "poet by sound of trumpet," and you may be sure will rather make a hanging than a laughing matter of it. The English language has not the word for the vanity of a poor worm having a half hour of glorious life. When the lights went out and the trumpets ceased to blow, the tyrants of Rome and Syracuse would be alone with their doubts. But the worm will resolve his ambition to rest in his joy on turning—a self-complacent, harmless sort of masquerade, in most instances, being probably only in sober truth of quiet performed; surely very enjoyable, and with most pardonable inflation.

Authors who are careering in the full pride of success are of course humble. Before me lies the ninety-first edition of that very pleasing performance, "The Idle Thoughts," and, as is due, this idol of the people is humble. "This book wouldn't elevate a cow," are the Idle Fellow's words to the world. What humility! and I am proposing to interest "philosophers, poets, and divines." I! The thing is too ridiculous. It will be hard getting rid of a first edition of "them ere" thoughts. And herein therefore do I place preface to the following effect:—"This work ought not to have elevated a worm." There is a wonderful deal of odd play about your literary animal. The bright-eyed eagle makes a show as

if he were a blind bat. The turning worm makes pretence with the voice of the roaring lion, an announcement strange to the public, unaccustomed to the competitions which swelled the soul of Dionysius; and behold, seeing the bat, the creature is retransformed to his original humbleness.

After all, it ought to be but an ordinary adventure to write a drama and proclaim it equal to the French. My friend proclaimed to the world some time ago that his manufacture of a fine fabric was now equal to the French, and nobody said that was conceited. And why should a fabric-maker of the drama—which to many is so much blank paper, for all they understand it effectually in print—be treated differently, if he explains his methods to produce the required results. It will be open to the witty to be “after” the Prince de Guemené to the Abbé d’Aubignac, and cry, “I do not quarrel with the author for having followed the rules of Aristotle and Shakespeare, but I cannot pardon the rules of Aristotle and Shakespeare for having occasioned so wretched a tragedy.”

Then will the author, in the words of Dr. Johnson, “feel like the Monument,” and have the satisfaction of adopting Carlyle’s opinion of Voltaire’s visit to the Café de Procope as “altogether inadequate;” for what could the Café know of *Semiramis*? what could all Paris know of it “on the second night”? Things inadequate, indeed, will go on as before; including the author’s conceit and the British drama.

LESLED: LORD OF THE ISLES.

A Drama.

IN FOUR ACTS.

Characters.

ROBERT THE BRUCE, *crowned King of Scotland.*

LESLED, *rightful Lord of the Isles.*

HEISKAR, *in possession of the Isles under forged will of the deceased Countess Ina, mother of Lesled ; Heiskar being her second husband.*

D'ARGENTINE, *English General, Commissioner of King Edward I., claiming to be Lord Paramount of Scotland.*

MACDOUGAL, *Uncle of Editha of Lorn.*

HAIG, *Sheriff to King Edward, and kinsman of Lesled.*

MACNEIL, } *friends of Lesled.*

DUART,

FRIAR JOSEPH.

MURDOOH, *a Steward.*

DIARMAD, *a Soldier-Clerk.*

ABBOT ; DE LISLE ; *Messengers, Soldiers, Peasants, &c.*

EDITHA, *Princess of Lorn.*

LORNA of Darroch.

MORAG, *an Abbess.*

Hags, Maidens, Dancers, &c.

Scenes.

Ardtornish Castle, on the Morvern shore of Argyle, a chief stronghold of the Lords of the Isles, and a meeting-place of their Parliaments.

Dunolly Castle, Oban, a stronghold of the Lords of Lorn.

LESLED: LORD OF THE ISLES.



ACT I.—THE RE-BETROTHAL.

SCENE I.—*Open place at Ardtornish Castle.*

Enter MACNEIL and DUART, meeting.

DU. Macneil !

MAC. Long live the Bruce !

[DU. What mean you now ?

MAC. Where I lay, lazy in the sinking light—
Ardtornish rocky walls, above the tide,
In which young Lesled's bride weds traitor flesh—
There on the beach—my heart bounding quickly—
Stood forth the noble majesty, our king,
The Bruce ; and then the figure vanished,
Like a star closed in by earth's cloudy gloom.]

DU. Great heaven ! then our king lives !

Our noble king in life, and here to-day !

MAC. Look, there he is, it is the king that comes !

Behold the noble Bruce, 'tis he himself !

Enter BRUCE.

DU. Alone, inglorious, save within his soul,
Where lives an army of the mighty world.
Noble king ! great Bruce !

MAC. King of Scotland ! welcome, great sire !
Make thy commands, we follow to the death.

BRUCE. Friends to the Bruce ! Macneil, much greeting ;
Duart, most loyal one to the cause.

Note.—This play is exactly the same length as French's acting edition of *Othello* ; but it may be further shortened, as indicated.

From Rathlin am I, loyal brothers, come
To find old friendships fallen. Ina's dead ;
Lesled, her son, Lord of the Isles, not heir ;
Not in his own ; not with Editha wed !
Her marriage hour with greedy Heiskar's come.
I seek for Lesled and this princess now—
The castle enter, as I am, alone.
Nay, I do go.

DU. Then 'tis to die ! By heaven, you will not !

BRUCE. A Bruce knows not a word like die.

DU. Go bid the lark with hawk consort and mate,
As bid Lord Lesled to Dougal's daughter wed.
This Easter my lord to Iona goes,
To celebrate Life's blessed victory ;
I pray you let us seek him for your sight,
And join in making plan of common cause,
For Scotland and her king and righteous laws.

BRUCE. I would unite the Isles and Lorn.

MAC. Great sire, cast back the ocean tides.

BRUCE. Oh, liberty needs Scotland back again.

Oh, fallen days that see our sons not proud,
But meek, dejected, and to cloisters driven ;
Lesled, to high and noble purpose dowered,
Wake, arise, to thy kingdom gather.
[I am that same Bruce, crowned king of Scotland,
A fugitive, homeless, wifeless, childless,
Whom the whole world thinks vanquished, dead,
By a long series of untoward ills.
Mark, friends, stout Scotsmen, mark :—I live ;
enough—

As the poor worms gaze at and pity me,
The hour approaches that I fill the throne.

What do you here inactive in the cause—

The cause of Scotland and old liberty ?]

Stay this foul Heiskar's marriage.

Editha, returned from her two years' south,
Worships Lord Lesled. Woman loves the true,
Then loves she while the living world lasts her.

[In future ages keen eyes shall mark yon place,
And cry : There stood a daughter who fought
best,

In her rage loving him she knew displaced
Yet offering joy-songs to the gracious God,
Far in the solitude of bleak Scavaig.]

Go toll their marriage-bell. I'll get them now.

MAC. Amen, great king! My heart beats high to hear.

BRUCE. Meantime, you too find Lesled for this place.

DU. Fly not, great sire, to Macdougals teeth.

Jealous, treacherous, and murderous crew.

Look, my lord, they come, such miscreants come!

Behold Lord Lesled, upright, walks away,

From traitor tribes that fill the land of Lorn,

Who hang on infamy to make them rich.

Woman's frail love's nought to her whole land's
hate;

Lesled's dead and in his grave if traitors joins.

BRUCE. Stand both aside. I'll wrench the tiger's jaw.

'Tis the soft prelude to a mighty stir,

My due advertisement and bold proclaim

Of the providence and my star of fate.

Go ring your merry bell, and Lesled win,

The husband of fair Lorn and Scotland's son.

MAC. Here are the thieves, just come from Edward's
court;

The bridegroom one, the other rascal too,

Haig, who would too usurp the Isles and Lorn.

Enter HEISKAR (crushing paper), followed by HAIG.

DU. Should we not draw and slay them in their stew?

MAC. (*drawing sword*). Heiskar and Haig, apostate
villains, die!

BRUCE. Peace, peace, till the decisive hour is struck.

[*Exeunt BRUCE, &c.*

HEISK. Who are these men escaping with their spleen?

My mood is bloody when it should be gay.

Dressed in the bright fashion for altar's hour,

And to be written to by bride "I'm off!"

God's mercy, Haig, no story runs like this.

Murdoch, Dougal, Torquil! out, lazy louts!

You see your master cheated, yet you lie.

[HAIG (*aside*). Jilting is common when the man's a
fool.

I this scene love who brought it right to life.
Being most unprofitable—to myself—
To the lady, and to the common good—
I the mean hunks discarded, and did well.
I take him on again. That's double pay.
Mine's not a philanthropic office—yet.
By-and-by the giving ornament may wear.]

HEISK. All nice our march from England, then nay !
Lesled has done this, and should surely die.
The dogs that hate him let them loose upon him.
Haig, do you listen, and take my employ.

HAIG. Aye, if they smell benefactions solid.
I smell nothing here but old fir-tree gum.
I control a hound or two discreetly,
For ever have I justice—in my eye—
Combining that with prospects for my purse.
I keep some hounds, I say, to get paid debts.
Now Lesled is my kin. Yet I'm open
Still to work against his cause. For what's he ?
Wearing an aspect as if he pitied men,
A fellow far removed from practical life,
From whom I've hopes of nothing if he lived ;
For he's concerned with air's empire only,
And the air's intangible—I prefer gold.
What does your lordship offer in your cause ?
What do you rate this woman's worth at ?

HEISK. Two years absent from her rash love—Les-
led's—

It should not be she's at her feyer old.
But who can tell what next a woman does ?
We'll call him to account ; we'll throw him down.
What ho ! there, Torquil, Dougal. Am I forsook ?
Quick ! we'll devise, refreshed with France's wines.

[HAIG. I refresh with something more substantial.
My Lord Heiskar, I do not drink—I work.
This is bluster : wind not worth a reed's care.]

HEISK. Sir, sir.

[HAIG. Then 'tis revenge on unfortunate gain ;
Not victory for a cause at a man's heart.
I am what I am. I serve for high purpose,
A high one ; as my client has high services.

The world where these eyes opened did not smile,
And smile it must on me, with industry,
And industry that ends in wealth and rank.
To be upsides with great men, copy them.]
Haig, quick your help you cry. You see me still
A bit of flesh to toil and make you richer,
And for contemptuous hiring I crawl !
For brave brains put to use you give me words,
And some little silver at the year's close ;
[Though you my mind discover set so high.
All for little coppers am I sold to slave.
Ah ! now you sink, and your power and place
gone,
Unless I hold you up by wiliest hands ;
And your saviour is to have pennies.
For this sacrifice the farthings find me.]
How mean is man to benefactions best.
But, Haig, you are the poor man's son, you cry.
Can a beggar get a pride of heaven ?
What Christians are these in the purple born !
For their condescension I'm to baffle their foes,
And strike them to the doom of dreadful death.
By heaven, I'd rather side with outcasts,
And hug the stories of the world unknown ;
Unless I have a gracious pay in this.
I am what I am. Here—or elsewhere—rich fruits.
I stop Lesled checking King Edward's choice,
And keep Editha for you still—for lands.
Great lands for all this, or their wedding's near.
French wines ? Here's cheaper—the old fir-tree
gum.

HEISK. I'll give thee two whole glens and hills the more

HAIG. Two whole oat-corns and a dish of ditch-herbs.

Now I will play the tyrant to thy purse.

My terms are the reversion to thy lands—

Thy own patch. Not thy wife's. They're stolen.

Start not. You're no worse sinner than the rest

Who rob the world by so-called enterprise.

Lesled is kept out by thy forgery. Start not.

Vow nothing. I know it as I know rabbits.

Instantly in my office the writ subscribe,

And Lesled flies away from thy bride's side ;
Wedded to sweet damsel suited to him—
Lorna, my client, whom I hold in hand ;
Coming south with her, badly scandal rose ;
And English De Lisle—who was to wed her—
In high wrath has gone. Lesled will wed her
If I, the conjuror, the trick play out.
[I've mirth at this. But work only for fruit.
I'm of this world, and scorn dreamers of else.
If I dream, I'll dream first of fortune here,
More solid than the Scotch gums or French wines,
Or weedy straths or rocky-ribbed mountains.
Knowest thou not I knew Editha first,
And was cast off instant Lesled saw her ?
I laugh mightily. Oh, only for fruit.
Women can increase tenfold, not good land.]
A bargain, my lord ? Then my office quick.
The deed's ready ; catch fortune in the nick.

HEISK. Most high counsellor, and oh most high price !
While striking terms yet, the great guests are met ;
Confusion and disaster run apace.

Enter DIARMAD.

How is't, sir ? what's stirring in the castle ?
Its master, now to be its halls' gay spark,
A cast-off garment shaking in the fields.
By thy look all's over, the guests gone forth.

DIAR. A strange commotion strikes the sultry air ;
Whispers are deep with patriots at their doors.
The patient monk was seated in the hall,
With noble guests to see Editha wed ;
There entered stranger knight with travel stained,
Still calm, majestic, and of piercing eye,
Who struck each lord and minstrel with an awe,
That raised again a proud defiant gaze.
He did forbid Lord Heiskar's marriage then.
A silence fell, as saw this purpose gained.
One questioned if in voyage aught he knew
Of the rebellious crew of outlawed Bruce,
Whom 'twas whispered the grave had not yet held.
He made known the royal Bruce had sworn ere

Thrice three days might come and go, that banner
Should blow in Scottish winds from England's:

"Now by Columba's shrine," 'twas sworn

"'Tis Bruce himself;" the cry went forth

"And for the Comyn's death he dies to-day."

Their muttered threats of vengeance swelled to
wild

And warlike yells. Then Argentine stood forth,
The generous and brave of England's knights.

"Never," he cried, "shall violence in my sight
Oppress the great and banished Scottish knight."

And sainted Abbot's voice made quick for peace.

Then vanished guests as phantoms from the hill,

And all was over of proud marriage-bell.

HEISK. My sword! Ah! that's my sword again; not
pranks.

HAIG. Pranks! I tell thee thy policy's pranks.

Put up thy weapon. Bruce for years must skulk.

My office holds their kingdom for its clients.

To my office, my most honourable lord,

Where causes great are won by wisest arts.

[DIARMAD and HAIG surround and lead him.

My lord, thou'rt times most liberal of men;

But to my office and more honour win—

My office, the key of fortune; if slow, sure.

HEISK. One so laden with fees must move slowly.

[*Exeunt* HEISKAR and DIARMAD.

Enter MURDOCH.

HAIG. Lesled wins back. Murdoch, you're adrift,

As rogues who've compromised with Heiskar.

Consult no more on this. There's an end to't.

Lesled is honest, and will have none like thee.

Take to the hills and rocks; begone; he reigns.

He'll scourge you as for thefts. Off to crab-
holes.

When a man's played out he gets out of sight.

MURD. Ah ha!

HAIG. Ah ha! Are you De Lisle's avenger then?

By heaven I think Lesled has him wronged

For coming with the Englishman's fair bride.

But vengeance is not right. Crawl to thy crabs.

Yonder's your new monarch and his fresh fish.

MURD. Ah ha !

HAIG. Paltry ahas, man, do not cope with force.

Enter MACNEIL and DUART.

No more ahas in face of triumph's march,

But subtile business and hands most harsh.

(*Aside.*) That rogue might assassinate Lesled now.

Aye, there they strut, the poor lost patriots.

How weakly are the tribe by folly ate.

Our superiors do these youths feign, Murdoch ?

I'm an apostate and a traitor, I

Who own a king to make a poor land great.

Beggars, do they look down upon my gains ?

Midges, do they see my crowning heights ?

Fools that love feasting on their vanity ;

They scoff and sneer at my keen business ;

Turn their eyes to air and fan themselves great.

I hate the prigs ; could buy each up and all.

Good eve, good sirs ; came you to this marriage ?

MAC. No ! More, we do not choose to speak of it,
And would be free of your company and curse.

*MACNEIL and DUART draw swords ; also HAIG
and MURDOCH ; latter receding.*

HAIG. I humbly leave you. Ha ha ! men of Bruce !

Murdoch, these fellows sharpen our good swords

With their teeth. Take service with me, Murdoch.

I have a scheme of grandeur thou wilt share.

Why not I have the Isles—and more—myself.

Murdoch, I'll not banish thee to crab-rocks.

Come, be merry. Isles and Editha mine,

Thou'lt rob me—and I'll wink—thousand yearly.

Crack thy fingers and dance—after business.

[*Exeunt.*]

MACNEIL and DUART, enraged, follow HAIG and MURDOCH.

Enter LESLED, unarmed and deprecatingly.

LES. Stay ! let the industrious spider weave.

MAC. My lord, seize your Isles, the usurpers doom.

Du. Haig, that inveterate plotter and foul rogue
From London's come. Down with him ere sends
forth

Pestilent airs that rob thee of fair life.

Your cause is ours. This moment call to arms.

LES. Oh, more than kind ! Yet have I now no war.
I know him most avaricious, cunning,
Envious of men's possessions. But what
Have I ? He sees me more in hut than castle,
Drinking the air than at rich tables set,
Giving good day to men as poor as I.
Will he live my life ? I make him welcome,
And if he scoffs, as sure, let his spite die.

Enter Peasants groaning at Officers with torches at a distance ; MACNEIL and DUART, &c., concealing LESLED ; Officers hurrying, and exeunt.

MAC. There hurry the angry friends of fair Lorn.

Form we too and break them ere they gather.

PEAS. Lesled and Bruce, our lord and king !

LES. Away with your bright swords ; they rust for me.
I've loved my islands from my childhood on ;
And of our old men eloquent I'd hear
Such stories of their delights within them
That not on earth could be a place so rich.
Ah ! how I pitied people far away from home,
From our home centre of the universe,
Where men were brothers ; the wild woods, moun-
tains,

And the streams, contending with them to give
To my young fancy a world's paradise.

Then died their queen, my mother. And then
rose

From men wild beasts, in the forest roaring ;
Where strangled creatures with hideous eyes
Lay in the daisied shades ; the streams with blood
Stood muddy in the sun ; and to the hills
Fled affrighted starvelings mad with wrongs.

All this of man's ambition ; but not mine,
Rightful heir to fairest Scottish islands.

Ah ! I'll not wade through slaughter to my own.

How much throat-cutting, what measure of blood
 To smoothe the claimant's path to this rude seat,
 What murders committed, fellows, to secure
 The fair Isles untroubled ! Get you now gone.
 No, when the gracious power of Heaven works
 To make the universal mind accord,
 And I the object of their settlement,
 Then I will shake my older grudges off,
 And take on dreams of love to try their life.
 Acquaint your people of my devotion
 To government, justice, and good order,
 And should you see Heiskar's procession
 With the Princess Editha for his bride,
 Pass it in silence. I know their struggles,
 And how hard the world has won them.

[*Exeunt Peasants dully.*]

MAC. The king demands redemption now
 Of Editha's pledge and makes you hers.
 He toasts you richly in Ardtornish halls.

[LES. The heart that's inconsolably vexed
 Because it loses its own choice, accuses
 Heaven and disparages creation.
 How welcome gains divine philosophy,
 Attacking chaos with enchanting dreams,
 To see in humbler visages of life,
 Eternal joys provided for fair eyes.]
 The act is brave and generous, as your own.
 But what boots it now if I wish slaves well ?
 I slake my thirst in drinking true success
 To the sad rogues that take my cloak and coat.

DU. Such ecstasy seems madness : good my lord —

LES. Here's to thy good in taking, Lord Heiskar !
 Fair health to thy ambitions and thy loves !
 God give thee right peace to enjoy thy bride !
 Ay, well ! ah ha ! how very well, at start.
 Mark how I progress in my art of life.
 You call me mad. It is enjoined and done.
 Haig, thou dost envy my just birthright too,
 And loves, and everything I e'en not held.
 I drink to thy thought of them for strong hold.
 At what a godlike banquet do I toast !

I give them all, than have them famished fiends,
My heart aglow and my old spleen now fled.
Why should hate rankle, why I wish to slay?
With sweet desires we find the better day.

MAC. There's no fair business in it, my lord.

LES. If they were friends, what merit had I then?
A selfish dog, who thinks he'll share the bones.
[Leave me to walk beside these meadow-sweets,
Smiling as evil with his members rage.*
And when I think of who's beyond the stars,
And very pleased and glowing at these toasts,
With melancholy moaning forest music
I'm in ecstasy, without ambition.]
Farewell till nine. I have business near;
The fair good Lorna's cause invites me in,
[Then Columba finds me not forgetful
Of his high spirit, touching us with grace
As on his stony pillow we lie down,
At brave Iona, warlike to win the world
To better purposes and pleasures pure.

MAC. What fate you seek, the world will claim it not.
But oh! watch, watch. When time seems tame
and slow

Up in an instant winds from all worlds blow.]

LES. I came to linger o'er a mother's grave,
And in that contemplation pleasure find,
Free from harsh strife and blood or lover's mind.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Near Castle as before; a Church; a Monument. Enter FRIAR JOSEPH; proceeds to rope of church-bell and pulls.*

FRIAR J. Toll, marriage-bell. The bell's stuck fast. Dumb bell! ah! well done, bell. I see thy meaning. Wisdom has stopped the pair from wedding. Well done, Minerva—Hymen superannuated and a failure. Toll, Minerva. She tolls. Ah! thou, Minerva, make marriages not for a moment's mirth and an age of dulness, but an

* This looks selfish; but the poet gathers strength as he worships so. Luther expressed the same sentiment two hundred years after.

eternity of love. Great goddess, toll, toll. Again ; toll in the natures calculated to be the complement and joy of each other : to the staid philosopher, the merry heart ; to the coldly prudent, the kindly eye and hand ; to the gay, the solidly wise ; to the patient and humble, the active spirit. Toll, toll, toll for everlasting bonds of amity. Toll, toll, toll ; they come. Thou pair art of Minerva, or old Hymen only ?

Enter HAIG and LORNA together, followed at a distance by MORAG (not as Abbess), keeping aside.

HAIG (*to Lorna*). De Lisle is fled then ; no wedding with him.

[*Aside.*] I made that sure ; another scene I love.
De Lisle, my client, was advised to fly,
For Lesled wronged him, and that's a certainty.]

LORNA. I who gloried in my Bruce's cause,
I brought my life to strange and new desires
That I might be the English soldier's wife.
You counsel me. They say you have great power.

HAIG. For that sweet office I have rich surprise :
I have another lover for fair eyes,
The pick of Scotland, lady. No frivol,
But rich with sweet desires and gay with love.

[*Exeunt.*]
FRIAR J. (*sings*). King Edward swears he'll hold the
land,

And good King Bruce he swears as well ;
But I take rabbits from the sand,
And drink my draughts in holy cell

[*Drinks out of flask.*]

For much business, much refreshment.

MOR. Merry friar, for whom toll you this marriage-bell ?

FRIAR J. Each toll, madam, has its own tale. The first was for a couple of fools ; one a greedy hunks, and the other a make-believe. Thinking shame on it, the bell refused its office. The second was but a lame affair too ; the man made off for jealousy, and the forlorn fair one haunts the church as if she were to buy a lair for her

burial ; while she has now an internal eye on another man. Fore heaven, madam, your sex love that bell ; they will live on it in preference to listening to my reading of the scrolls of eternal felicity. The third toll, why may not it be for the new man for the maid. As for the fourth, gracious lady, if it be not for thy sweet self, I know not for whom it should be.

MOR. 'Tis not for my Lord Lesled then ?

FRIAR J. The bell is cracked that tolled for my Lord Lesled, ha ! ha ! ha ! It was always to be, and never has been. She he was to marry is back again from London. For luck I will toll once more. [Tolls.

Oh merry bells are pealing now,
And Eila's 'ee is bonnie O ;
Go get the parson o'er the knowe,
And tie the knot sae tightly O !

MOR. Then my lord has never married for thinking of her who has been far away : he had but one fancy.

FRIAR J. Ay, faith, an' I won't answer that. An' a man live long enough he may have two.

ED. You say well, friar.

FRIAR J. Pray, madam, are not you disposed to step within ? We are doing an excellent business, and supply many vacant hearts with suitable furnishings. No ! Still good luck follow thee. Here comes my pair of hound and hare. The hound has the air of an ambassador for another male puss.

King Edward swears he'll hold the land.

[Exit into church.

Re-enter LORNA and HAIG. Exit MORAG.

LORNA. Bid me from yon high cliff fly to the sea,
Counsel me not another man to love.

HAIG. Young Lord Lesled found you Christmas two years.

LORNA. [High on Dunvegan and Braccadale's shore,
Where angry winds and waves to caverns roar,
Where women rocks with wild sea-wreaths are
bathed,

I marked the softness of Lord Lesled's voice.]

But his thoughts were not set on my poor heart ;
Sir, sir, I will not be advised thus madly.

HAIG. He goes with thee to the altar ; wed him.
[Stay ! Since Nature brought me for business life,
I've doctored aberrations vast to health ;
There's madness in Editha's blood—a shrew—
And Lesled would be saved. Then save him quick.
That's the luxury and crowning of true worth.]
Women should be daily saving sad men.

LORNA. I'll quick away ; find me in far-off Skye.

HAIG. In far-off fiddlesticks. Sweet one, still charm,
Fairest of clients, to the altar. Thy lands
Are forfeited and in Editha's hands.
Thou being natural should resent that,
But keep it to thyself meantime. Be sweet ;
Charming in thy greatness o'er man's deceit.
I see thou smilest through these April tears.
Oh, by heaven, Lorna, both suffering great ;
It is the every act the gods decreed,
That in these moods, as Friar makes a moan,
A groan, a prayer for evil wretched man,
And hints that others are of more desert,
Thou wilt embrace the noble at thy side.
Save him, witch of soul, beauty and sweetness.

[*Music.* HAIG kisses LORNA's hand as he
leads her to church, which she enters ;
watches LESLED enter and go into
church ; and follows stealthily.

Enter EDITHA and MORAG.

MOR. Lord Lesled comes, after thy long absence.

ED. As swift and eager as summer swallow ?

I bear him news that would transport a man.

MORAG. So please your ladyship, to this tomb,
[Where the good son to mother's love renews
The blessed flower he promised in his youth ;
Around him horrid men and bloody hopes.]
Farewell to the sad world breeds in his heart ;
His hopes to me seem set on life divine. [*Exit.*

ED. Farewell ? Not thus are parted entwined hearts !
Could he believe a moment I'd wed chaff.
Am I doomed because I flew to England
To save my house and lands—keep from the woods ?

And there made prisoner and played my part.
 My love! too fond to be beyond the world!
 Thy creed's not to win; but to be loving!
 Thou'dst give to man and woman all thyself
 And leave thee bare to call the manna down.
 But to me first thou'lt give what true is mine.
 Come to me then, thou lavish loving soul,
 And I will give thee power, to cost thee nothing,
 Who will not waste thy fancies getting. I get,
 And all the animals rapacious kill.
 God forgive me; but Haig is foul hell's imp.

*Music. Re-enter LESLED followed by HAIG (stealthily);
 EDITHA moves aside observant.*

ED. My ever soul and precious, art thou near,
 While I cry halt, halt, with villain by thee,
 That will rob us of all ours and our lives.
 The fox is killed; for, cunning, strikes our plan,
 That, failing death, every hour be sick.

[*Exit HAIG.*

Enter several maidens (with flowers.)

Maidens' Hymn (at tomb).

Light of my heart, thou memory dear,
 It is not dark if thou be near!
 Oh, let no earth-born clouds arise
 To hide thee from thy children's eyes.

[*They strew flowers on the tomb; LESLED
 kneels at the tomb, Maidens going out.*

LES. I draw me closer to the unseen world;
 For earth contains not any fountains great
 For the sad bosoms which must needs be filled.
 Here I might unearth the dead, and in thy mask
 Of life again read the likeness of great truth.
 Aye dash the dull and sullen clod aside,
 For image loftier than the world now holds.
 But I am thy son, cursed not with madness.
 Thy resolution to be just is mine.

[*As LESLED kneels, enter MURDOCH, partly
 concealed, followed by EDITHA; MUR-
 DOCH advances on LESLED with dagger.*

ED. Lesled ; ho ; rise ! for thy life ; murder !

[*She gives cry ; LESLED clutches her.*

LES. (*to retreating assassin*). Say wherefore I am fatal
to thy cause. [Exit MURDOCH.

Editha ! But how to hear thee—Heiskar's !

ED. 'Tis Haig's knife in that villain's hands. Thou'rt
whole.

LES. Whole in the outward man. But I have bled.

ED. You know the whelp's obedience. A mere show,
At London's long imprisonment, to save all.

We'll speak but little of a hated time.

Haste thee to live, to be thyself in power.

I bear great news. Confiding to D'Argentine

My unalterable love, he revealed

Thy rights. Thy estates are got without blood.

Now gracious summer from long winter bursts.

LES. Is this assured ? I do not know it.

ED. Lesled, thy path I'll smooth as 'twere velvet.

We have assurance ample as can give.

Be doom my portion if my good lord need

To scorch the butcherous interests of hate.

LES. The old days are fled ; with them old intents.

ED. Our first business is to live, not die.

From yonder wilds the savage beasts howl forth.

Go give thy flesh that they may feed and tear.

'Tis all the same to wait for Haig's hard steel.

Leave all the proofs to me. Once we begin,

Nought will hold us back from villain's skin.

He comes here. Vermin must be destroyed,

Which eats ours up, and ourselves quick will
kill.

LES. If in my philosophy love will learn,

Not royal roads nor smoothest seas are there,

But the hope always of a present haven

In the unseen smiling mind. Upbraid me

For my rapt conceit. But steal me not off

To the harsh reality of empty strife,

Where we may thrive not, while seem to win ;

Find death while the foul cry's of greedy gain,

Hell and its torments, where seems pleasure won.

Witness me, Heaven, I proclaim myself

A captive to the Christian creed of mercy,
 Giving to the meanest fullest measure.
 Witness the rainbow in the troubled sky,
 The stars beneath the clouds of darkest night,
 The daylight rising from the stormy depths,
 The sparrow minded from all-seeing eye ;
 And can I with deliberation kill a man,
 Image of maker of these great omens,
 From wanton lust of power or fear for self ?
 I knew him as a merry tricky boy.

ED. They come, and our proud march follows quickly.

Enter MACDOUGAL, HEISKAR, BRUCE, D'ARGENTINE, and HAIG. Music.

MACD. Defend thyself with sword or die the death.

LES. Speak reason ; not with swords. I use none.

Your bloody fights I have detested years.

Accuse me ; if I'm wrong I will make right.

MACD. Art not guilty of stealing my great niece.

LES. Most guilty of loving her. But no more.

MACD. Go break thy lute ; thy hymns to fishes sing.

[Orpheus beware ; flying from Aristæus,

Thy Eurydice may feel the serpent's sting

And die. But in thy hopes of her hast thou

Not looked back upon the nether world,

And all is lost, herself and thee not joined.]

She faints upon the sickly mystic fare.

Speed on thy way, and in the church make prayer.

LES. Of kin I'd speak better in your shoon.

D'ARG. The noble Lesled my good king won't cross,

For England finds him one who reason loves.

Now only would he wed if he weds right.

Preserve this honest lord. Sovereigns have need

Of men of character to join in rule.

I take it on me to try his claim for lands,

And if he wins, then wins this lady too,

If she is bent to keep her heart as true.

HEISK. King Edward, to thy great mind I appeal :

Haig draws it, and with swift horses bears it.

Men and their causes die if Haig decrees.

HAIG (*aside*). He bears some charm of life, yet I must win.

He drinks a poisoned cup. And she weds none.

BRUCE. When on Ben Deanavi high and rugged,
At eve the pale star communed with in song,
And 'side Duntulm's rocky walls, where ocean
Sighed, the enchantress of his vision stood,
Wondering at youth who such preferment sought—
They passion drew with joy in things divine.
(On barren wastes dull doubts lie down and die.)
The fate was sealed for union of this pair.

D'ARG. His suit to-morrow we'll try and end.

Till that time no priest will be called in.

BRUCE. And now, good-night to all. Think of me still.
I will be heard of, and fresh thoughts may fill.

[*Exeunt.*]

Music. EDITHA and LESLED remain, HAIG going *aside*.

HAIG (*aside*). Foiled? No, no; old rogues, young folks, may sleep.

Devil may take me; Lesled's place I keep. [*Exit.*]

ED. (*aside*). Still vexed; 'tis certain our whole lives are torn,

Unless this savage beast to-night is choked.

No one on earth's assured as I am, he

Is but a murderer as sure as Cain;

And justice is not seated in this realm.

I then am called on by the fates of earth,

And Heaven must wink at least to see't done

By the one marked out for the hard office.

This little hand of mine should not shirk work,

Nor fear to foul itself, if end is good.

Oh little hand, oh perplexed weakly arm,

Seek not man's strength; for that looks not to use.

Oh, all's too sure my lord would judge me here.

He walks so meekly by the jaws of death

That I'd fain forward rush and shame his ease,

But that there follows anguish at the sight,

And creeping flesh and terrors of long doom.

(*To him*) Lesled, art thou to die? we meet and part;

Not I, but the dark grave embraced. Oh, mad ;
Take these papers, read, and Haig's crime quick
know.

Then call the criminal for execution.

LES. The sheriff these. I'll think of all the rest.

ED. Haig's but the sheriff. Thou art greatest here.

The powers of air uphold me in my right.

What are we worth who not our places use,

But let them rust that all vile things may grow ?

Heaven has not ordered this submission.

With thy death staring, and thy lover by,

Her tears not dry, with her devotion warm,

To be adrift on vacant angry sea—

'Tis mad defiance of due prosperity.

To shun the little labour brings all round !

Enter MURDOCH (as if to attack).

Great heaven thy light ; Lesled, be saved !

LES. Again I shout : how am I in thy way ?

I will remove the horror that thou see'st,

Or give thee fortune as thou enviest mine.

MURD. I am De Lisle's messenger of war

To wreak his vengeance on thy cunning hand,

That took his wife away before his face.

He saw thee do't. This take for that foul stroke.

*[He advances with hanging dagger ; EDITHA
rushes forward and seizes it, and strikes
the man's breast ; he staggers out.]*

ED. Thus do I, woman of the common world,

Not yet advanced unto the far-off stars !

LES. Then the steel's blunted to unarmed innocent.

ED. Lesled ! thou art alive ; not dead nor hurt !

But thou courttest death. Thy life's heart is fled.

And I—I am, but like thy flesh, flung down,

That every dog may tear it. I am gone.

'Tis seen in listless arm, in far-off eye :

The soul abhorreth, and that love's a lie.

Assassin's rage may yet to me be true ;

Charging dishonour on thyself—and me.

[Throws down dagger and goes.]

LES. (*with strong affection*). Editha ! thou shouldst be honoured. Look you,
 'Tis easy to delight with rising suns,
 But obscured to cherish shows loving eyes.
 My heart is living, love ; hence lives for thee.
 Pray grave mayn't be the land for my earl's crown,
 And for the wedding bed provide the down.
 Thou marvellest. I will be ever for thee.

[*Draws her to him.*

ED. The plot gets thick, to crush me with foul tales,
 As thee to kill. Did you not now with love
 Make me be as the sweet girl, this dagger

[*Seizing it.*

I'd hurl this instant in Haig's murderous heart
 Where he lies, setting his snares for morrow.

LES. Live, sweet, for love ; if that it be an hour,
 I think but of it, and of its long power.
 Not hate, but love, and only love we heed,
 To-morrow, spite of all, we now will wed.

ACT II.—THE MARRIAGE.

SCENE—*Hall in Ardtornish Castle.*

Enter HAIG and HEISKAR.

HAIG. Hear this : Every relation spat upon this proposed union of Editha and Lesled. [Her blood wild ; her family enemies ; her pleasure in the pride of life. He mild and a philosopher, a follower of Bruce, a child of song, of the hills, the sea-shore, the cloisters, and the worship of the unknown spirits. They wed misery.] Now my lord, to wed you is to wed nobody. By that I mean a husband with no mighty opposites.

HEISK. But they can't wed. Stick to that.

HAIG. The law says so. Lorna and Lesled were not married by heaven or by earth. What of that? Are they not married by letter of the law?—the law, the gathered wisdom of ages, though the man no more knows this bit of wisdom for him than a whelp its history.

The law says so. The diamond, my lord. (*Gets it.*) With this egg-shaped jewel I egg on Lorna further to the law. Oh, that to buy wisdom should be so costly—but so it is always.

HEISK. [By the mass, that will be as long as between earth and heaven.] If it be law only, I am undone.

HAIG. Tush! Editha having word of this, will either throw up the intended marriage or be out of it in three days. [Dost think I will try thy patience; no; pay well. Have all thy followers at the castle walls. And pay well. God help thy lethargy at pay-time; then art thou mild and passive.]

Enter DIARMAD.

[HEISK. "The court, the court;" art thou that crier, sir? Would it could tell us sometimes what's the truth.]

DIAR. The priest, Friar Joseph, has hurried off to the far north, and Lorna, an uncontradicted witness, is safely bestowed.

HAIG. Success comes from cunning and coin. Lesled is the natural man; Lesled is doomed; because thou hast bought brains with diamonds.

DIAR. Murdoch's repairs there bode mischief. He is either burying his books or preparing for the burial of the man who is to overhaul them—that he must think Lord Lesled.

HAIG. How savage are men baulked not of their rights but in their wrong! Have you time, my lord, to put a spoke in the wheel of this devil's murderous fabric? He is unconsciously working for thee, but with devilish tools. Have you leisure, my lord, to prevent this?

HEISK. No time, which is precious as diamonds.

HAIG. We are all too busy to act the good Samaritan to a problematical object of compassion. I noticed the fellow; and if any of us were to come across my Lord Lesled maimed in that quarter, we would raise him up; would we not, Lord Heiskar?

HEISK. Ay, and set him on a beast and provide him twopence.

HAIG. How Christian! You see my lord's good heart.

DIAR. All rogues together ! I will warn Lord Lesled's friends. [Exit.]

[HAIG (*aside*). Now does this fool think I am so slaving
That to crime's borders I rush on for him.
For his sake true ; he'll give up to justice.
And my good habit is to do much for it,
When hand in hand with profit to myself.
I love my neighbour ; to myself throw pelf.]

Enter EDITHA and MORAG ; HAIG and HEISKAR draw aside.

HAIG. Editha's down. On surface peacock gay,
Wan and drooping swan she is within,
Taking the colour from my known success.
The heart reckoned on she fancies gone ;
Away and gone from her, as I live and love.
This is she who will not touch me with her dress.
Yet must I through her strike her and Lesled,
For he's a rock to those who think to knead.

HEISK. Oh, excellent and erudite in hearts !

ED. How pale he looks ; no spirit in his voice.
Oh, I did dream last night in dreadful fear.
I dreamt my true love was not true at all,
But nightly lay within another's arms.
If that were so—this is Saturday I tell—
Tell me it cannot be with one so fair
As Lesled—dear lady—speak, assure me.
Flesh scratches be not mortal ! 'Tis remorse !

[Pause.]

Oh, it's not possible the cause is marriage ;
And that in a moment I will see him rush
Into this hall a spectacle of woe,
To tell me that in one rash hour he linked
Else, and dared deceive no longer.
Then would I utter such withering blasts,
That he would perish utterly in sight.
Oh, hateful deceiving monster, that man
Who keeps a maiden's heart for years,
To throw it when he tires. Unthinking churl,
Base, perfidious, heartless wretch, who takes
The blossom of her lifetime off and cuts

The plucked plant adrift. Unmeasured monster,
 Hideous effigy of man. Wilt walk the roads,
 Pretend to laugh, be interested in things
 Of prattle and the common joys ; yet dead ;
 For dead he is who feels not the torture
 Of the heart spurned that loved him to his love.
 To put a dagger in that breast were meet ;
 That's feeling for him, the pain to flesh would
 Rouse the miserable thing, so ill-responding
 To the first sweet nature given, perished
 In the shrunken image of its Maker. [Pause.

No, no, my Lesled is not false but flat,
 With harsh experience, sweet resentments ;
 Pent up and dying to his high worship ;
 Fearful that his suit this night may fail him.
 I'll not believe such old wife fears.

Sure founded as the rock, earthly power
 Can't sunder me and my deep love, Lesled.

MOR. You are the bravest princess in the world.

Truest woman attracts to truest man.

Thy holy zeal has nought with vengeance.

So sooner Paradise will be thy prize.

ED. (*kneeling*). Sweet mother, I am bound to seek for
 peace,

'Tis my prayer at gloamin and morning light ;

Accord your own with mine to gain it.

Oh, that the wrong world should know my spirit.

They name my castles, still, as eagles' nests,

Hawks' hills, and foxes' holes, while me declare

Have blood of murderers in my mad veins.

God pardon the revilers, good Abbess.

I am not this curse, or if I am so born,

Heaven, that dost hear thy poor creatures' cries,

Arrest the curse ! Have mercy on my flesh,

That my soul, seeking, may be worthy thee.

[MORAG raises and kisses her.

HAIG. Dream, lady ; be thou content with dreams,

Dainties in their griefs to life's obstructions.

HEISK. Haig and Socrates are synonyms.

Ah ! if she were thy client instead of me.

HAIG. She will be so soon ; they all are in time.

Enter LESLED.

Now's Easter, and he in Christian frenzy.
 I'll make such demands his lady must learn,
 That she'll suspect he's wishful to be off;
 And that will egg my process to right close.
 Sad wretch, he takes on most heavy burdens.
 Courts, without a sword, death, as carnage sickens.

[Exeunt HAIG and HEISKAR.]

ED. My dear lord ! heaven your just cause espouse,
 And keep envious hearts from guile against you.
 Full well I know what little cause they have.

LES. Editha ! sad ! I've no gain but thy joy.

ED. I value thy estates nought ; thy life all.
 For my dear love's enemies are brisk at work.
 Oh, mortal only with a lofty vision
 To scale the sky, stay with me in the world.

LES. The whole world with its happiness on face,
 Could show no brightness greater than I gain.

ED. [Thy adversary plays on men's passions.
 What honest souls lay down he heaps to heights,
 And greedy ears are tingled, then higher make.
 On victims crushed the wretched fabric falls.]
 He discovered Heiskar's forgery ; ay,
 But for himself. And his rage he scarce hides,
 Though from his sense conceals, or tries, his crimes.
 He will not yield. Let the famished wolf change.
 I've avoided this. I pray it rends not.

Re-enter HAIG.

LES. He comes accosting. Pray you let him speak.

[HAIG (*aside*). Lesled knows well ; loving full his high
 ways,

He knows the sacrifice to step in here,
 And lose his life. I have him in the mood,
 His and his bride may fall into my hands.
 He's high and noble in his rate of blood.
 I him love for it. But that love stifle ;
 For my chief need in rising is him down.]

ED. A cunning fire that my own wings have scorched ;
 A light of hell that bad attraction wins. *[Exit.]*

HAIG. I love her still, as I have done ever.

LES. Haig, what is that?

HAIG. I know you bear all truths. I loved her; ay,
Not Helen inspired more love than she did.

LES. Sir, I did not believe in your love.

HAIG. Nothing so supreme in folly
As splenetic melancholy.
For wild revenge I count it dear
To let it grow an inch a year.
Come, love, and give me pleasant things,
Which hands me sweets and blossom flings.
If I choose to make it money,
I'll buy more, and more be merry.
From the poets, my lord, mayhap your own
rhymes?

'Tis my philosophy, if sarcastic.

LES. I am the solitary saint of night,
Keeking through chink-holes at the far stars bright?
I should not meddle with marriage here,
But count my beads right on from year to year?

HAIG. Exactly, my lord, you so hit the truth.

LES. Should give you castles here with ceilings whole;
I burrow naked in an old clay-hole.

HAIG. That is the logical conclusion now.
I struggle to rise in the world I know,
And not like you, I'd sink and kiss the ground.
My lord, I rise, and if my kinsmen falter,
Why, on their crushed bones I mount to place.

LES. Cursed is the man who has no tenderness,
Whose breast no kindness stays, but holds straight
through,

Bristling and hard to his impatient gorge.
The quality of meekness wins the earth;
Such is the promise of Almighty Heaven.
Monarchs bend to the imperious call.
Like trees, theirs, planted by the quiet waters,—
Yielding rich fruit, with leaves not withering,—
The justs, who on green pastures prosper well.
Why should you rack your soul for what's not yours?

HAIG. Christian, I ask. It is your creed to give.
The king had set thy lands for me. And I

Yet more may ask be given by the will
Of that high prophet thine of Galilee.
Ha ! ha ! I smote thee on the right ; left cheek
give.

I've sued and have thy coat ; give then thy cloak.
Give me what I ask ; love me, bless me too ;
And do me good, even praying for me,
That have despitefully used you, as some say.
A Christian ? Save me from these half-Christians.

LES. Nestor need not swear the case is laughable.
With Holy Writ, good sir, you'll gain the world.
Oh, to have lived to know a humour grand,
That dungeon doors will be with laughter riven.
The rascal wolf refuses to prowl near it !
Ha ! thou there, me here, no stroke on thy back.
Kneel and to the high listening heaven,
Ever hopeful of the worst-grown natures,
Give joy while two great sinners to it rise.

[*Forces HAIG down.*]

I confess that I'd strangle this sad wretch.
Great heaven restrain me from the massacre.

HAIG. I confess I wish this lord's wife, Lorna,
Be proved as such to the whole judges' minds.
If that be sin, heaven forgive desire.

[*Rises with LESLED.*]

LES. Lorna my wife ; mocker universal !

HAIG. I mock you not ; that's why I came to you.
That I have heard said at the church last night,
And now you rave of prowling wolves. The fool
Who breaks in youth with all the stays of time,
Cries at his manhood the world's betrayed him,
Calls common enterprise a thieving rascal,
And the rash sympathy of woman hugs.
My lord, I have pushed your creed too far ;
Let that be forgot in your penetration's loss.
I know I have no right to speak so bold.
I think you may have a wife already.
You know I have the facts about this shire.

LES. And too much of the power.

HAIG. Oh, curse of marriage that all else than love
Should be so powerful to destroy it !

If thou'rt not wed, and still Editha want,—
Her people hate you as a thousand devils.
From these, and one too many in herself,
For thee a thousand dangers else are bred.
If muse as soft as the south air's whisper,
Where she's in love, the furious stroke's at hand.
You know the world too wisely. Know it now.
Get your estates ; marry not one of Lorn.
Leavè these fish to one who loves himself most,
And keeps them for his mouth and pride, not
heart.

No franker fellow lives than I myself ;
And this I tell ; moral charm's not there ;
Your sonnets, tales, your music and your dance,
Your worships and your peasant loves and lores,
Grow tame and foolish to ambitious ladies ;
And are most cursed folly to their kinsmen.
How soon you'll want to fly to deserts vast.
If you were older, Bruce in power, all quiet,
'Twere time enough, and then might all be
well.

Now 'tis a hell for her as for thyself.
Enough ; the instalment's very ample.

[*HAIG recedes.*

LES. I believe the devil sometimes whispers truth,
Thinking that we mortals will do opposite.
Editha will abjure his words, yet should hear.

HAIG returns.

HAIG. It was my due to be your well-wisher—
Ever so, and never was't more than now.
Think sharply and do business with me.
So may you save your life that you fair love.
You marry her to-night ; to-morrow die.

LES. By the world I will think. Again we meet.

[*Exit.*

HAIG. 'Tis in need oft those we like we oppose.
Lesled is pure, generous, and most true,
And I would serve him ; if he would serve me.
I'm most loving to those who make me rich.

Enter LORNA brought in by DIARMAD.

But he's too high ; and crusts and water kill me. '
O Lorna ! how I have pled thy cause now
With good Lord Lesled. He his folly sees.
Content you to wait by, for 'tis his cause ;
[Nor think he's doubtful if he seems some tame.
Were I flame for men in shape of woman,
I'd have them blazing till I charmed the skies '
And charred the sick ground with the dullards'
forms.]

LORNA. Why have you sent for me ? He wants me
not.

I'd rather be a moth and die at once
Than linger longing for a new-found light.
I will not see thee, master. I will be gone.

HAIG. Thou knowest he does not demonstrate,
And, boiling, may seem cold as winter's snow.
But stay ; he must not see you till priest calls.
I'll get sign from him further he values.
This diamond be it—a mighty token.
Call out against his wedding. Then all's well ;
He is your own, saved from the jaws of hell.

LORNA. I'll need the signs indeed, though thou speak
truth. [Exit.]

Enter LESLED (with papers).

HAIG. He's wild to taunt me with some late designs.
He's off his narrow channel, on the shoals,
Already labouring in sight of wreck.
I'll pluck his brooch if he do close with me.
If Lorna wears it, Editha flies off.
I change my attitude and strike him hard.

LES. You give me—wisdom—you—you—

HAIG. I, even I, can tell the truth.

LES. Murderer ! [Holding out papers.]

HAIG. My lord, how now, what folly's this ?

LES. Now by these papers which I hold in hand
Evidence is overwhelming of thy crime.
I still am here, but you designed my death.
Dreading my people, for King Edward's ear

You made all right to bring them to his side.
Conspiracy as foul as hell's designs
Did rob me of my name ; then of my life,
All as natural as an old man's debt.
Now by your hands, as heart, as witness this.
By the great law you profit by be thou judged
And strangled in the bloody suits of death.

[*At his throat.*

HAIG. Oh, oh, oh ! help, ho ! he's mad !

[*Seizes LESLED's brooch and disengages.*

LES. I am most grieved, and hardly know my mind.

HAIG. What is it to be wise and frank and fair.

Oh, to be diligent in business vice,
To plot and struggle and confess't a crime,
To warn man of folly, of death, murder.

LES. Thou canst not, fellow, make me see it thus.

HAIG. Ay, my lord, you know I did not work for
you.

My lord, you have not worked for me, that's why.

Yet if you gain your lands to you this night,
'Tis I found them to you—I, murderer !

I did this not in your business, for sure
The first good rule of life's to do one's own.

I did it, being an heir of the estates,
Which you had lost to the right family,
Forsooth on plea of Christian mercy.

Give me credit for a proper action,
And seize my wisdom justly to your breast,
A breast tarnished with neglected duties—

LES. Give proofs I cannot marry the fair Lorn.

HAIG. The land is full of them ! They'd fill a book.
To begin—what preparation's yours for that event ? You
sang, hymned, danced, with wretched peasants ; made
staves for cripples, bathed blind eyes, tickling their ears
with chaunts. You did this, who for us your kinsmen
had neither voice, ear, nor legs. You let the usurper in
our seats. You laughed at our despair, were deaf to our
cries, blind to our marches to assail the thief. By
heaven, is this for Lorn ; nor wealth, nor power, nor true
rank, nor dues for friends, nor strokes for foes. The
alteration of your situation this night comes of my work-

ing ; I found the lands, and by heaven should have the bride that goes with them.

LES. Look you, hungry cousin, these are mere words
To me—to me—who see through all the cheat.
I'm sure to treat those kinsmen so again ;
To be as deaf to cries and blind to deeds
Which would corrupt and slay men for vile
gains.

I'll not stir an inch to slake greedy thirsts.
Go take back thy aid, given not for good,
But to pile up thy wanton lust of power.
Undo thy services for these estates.
Got sinister, away ; I'll none of them.
And thinkst I could not play the fox and wolf ?
I may forget my rapt conceits, sudden wake.
To-morrow I may have wholesale havoc,
Snap up to stump and rump the whole kin crew.
Many would perish who now think them safe.
I think, Master Haig, you would be worms' meat—
Eh, most deplorable and frank sinner !
With finger and thumb I could end your hour.
To-day the world seems fair and I am fain
To let beasts play that I might make my ain.
Eh, wolfy !—I wear the lamb's skin only.

HAIG. My lord, I take your hand. This is a man.
I see much further into your straight mind.
Now you are one of us ; I will deal even.
'Tis the first time two years I've known you well.
You know the service I can render
To the cause of the family I own mine,
And put you in the lordship of the Isles.
'Twas when you were not of this world I shunned.
I drank with Heiskar lately till he fell,
And then discovered where the knave concealed
In superstition rank your mother's will.
'Tis, as you know, you are the heir to all.
He woke, or I would then have had it out.
Behold the Isles are yours and glory else.
What will you give me since I do this thing ?
Only to take my wisdom to the heart.
It saves your peace and life, and me—the devil.

Meantime I take my leave, Lord of the Isles.

Away and live the while, not marry here. [*Exit.*]

LES. That I, being Bruce's, may be first gone down,
To let him hoist over the broken heads
Is his sure move ; whatever of my bride's.

Re-enter HAIG.

(*Aside.*) The demon enters still ; avaunt demon !
Arise revealed wisdom from thy books,
And my soul nurture, that by bloody hands
I may not to a cursed vengeance yield,
And tyrannous hate be mine, I all consumed.
Yet may philosophy strike soon as dream !
Is it not most strange that this lawyer here
Should for nothing, for what's beyond all need,
Murder fair lives to right and left of him,
While I for softness cannot kill to save !
What would he do if he had loves like mine ?
But watch the beast that was to end them
all ?

Oh ! 'tis monstrous ! Some maddened point of
time

Was it that gave me to this saintly dream
That it possesses me I feel most sure ;
I'd save the devil himself for pity,
Having a kindness for fallen grandeur.
I, the judge, by right, of these western coasts,
See wretch guilty by these papers shown me ;
The wofry, robber, and despair of all,
Yet left prowling, growling, and devouring.
Now, had a precedent been pressed, I'd strike.
Bruce versus Comyn rules the case in hand.
Did Editha argue with Comyn's death,
Which Bruce accomplished, of right most certain,
My mind's convinced, then I am instant bound.
It is an augury the villain dies.
This devil's dead then ; for she'll play that suit ;
Fire then, not water, speedy follows to't. [*Exit.*]

HAIG. I'm my own for ever ; which means not a fool.
Thus do I here stretch out my hands to save,
Though not a god, quite an honest knave.

His wisdom is not match for woman's haste,
 But seeds are sown which must grow to my taste.
[Exit.

*Music. Enter EDITHA and MORAG, LESLED, MACNEIL,
 and DUART, HEISKAR and HAIG, also LORNA and
 DIARMAD, Officers, &c.*

ED. Haig's a hundred irons. What my lord's done
 These two years I fear's in hand to wound him.
 Destroy fraud with me, Morag. God's mercy !
 MOR. Let lovers ne'er be absent long and far.
 You forced from Lesled to save your fortune.
 You kept it ; but nearly lost your lover.

*Trumpets. Enter D'ARGENTINE, MACDOUGAL, ABBOT, and
 Officers ; former taking high seat.*

D'ARG. The depute of my king's high court I sit,
 To try this suit anent the Western Isles
 Forward my lords, Lord Lesled and Heiskar.

HAIG. I plead Lord Heiskar's cause. The king-made
 match.

The mighty sovereign Edward so designed
 The Isles and Lorn should be united now,
 And that end hangs on lady's love being bye.
 But yesterday it was my client's suit that won.
 I pray you think that Lesled does not declare
 That he my client's bride his life will share.
 For weighty reasons I doubt that match can be.

LES. I'd rather be the wild man of the woods,
 And suck the grasses of their rancid juice,
 Than kiss the lips I don't revere and love.
 The trials are begun. The bride has cried I've
 won. [Kisses her.

ED. Love may not quite a joyful path all lie,
 But live it will as sad suspicions fly.

D'ARG. First call the Countess's old favourites,
 Who saw the writ, who heard her tell its news.

HAIG. Why, 'tis a farce ; 'tis foregone with those
 crones,
 Who for old trial were refused. As I thought,
 The cause is judged before the trial goes.

HEISK. Well done, oh valiant Cicero mine !

The unseen spirits of the vasty air

May speak of truth ; earth's hags tell lies.

D'ARG. My lord, I do not follow you.

HAIG. There's perturbation in his spirits.

MACD. General, when Orpheus went below to—

D'ARG. We will not follow him.

Enter HAGS.

You were in the service of the Countess Ina of the Isles
in her latter days. You heard her speak of her will.

HAGS. We did.

D'ARG. That disposed of her estates to Lord Lesled,
her son.

HAGS. It did.

D'ARG. Overcome with grief, yet did not she overflow
with love and affection for her only child, the young
Lord of the Isles.

HAGS. She did.

D'ARG. Everywhere and at all times was this testified.

1st HAG. It sang of lover false and rude ;

It spoke of friendship hollow.

It bore along on flowing tide ;

It smiled beneath the willow.

I heard it through the sighing wood ;

I thought of it in meadow.

Her love was writ in every rood :

Her death—for son to follow.

Chorus. She like the dust in storms scatter,

Heiskar's mud-in-winters sank her ;

Forger, liar, perjurer !

Superstition will thy crime discover !

[HEISKAR fumbles at his breast ; LESLED
advances on him and plucks paper.]

LES. Read, most gracious general, this will.

He some religion shows that it has lived,

Found on the person of the forger now.

D'ARG. Lesled is here the heir of all the Isles.

'Tis manifest and proven this is true.

Come hither, Abbot, and your office do.

Know that my dear master so designed it

That the chieftains of these lands should wed.
Therefore, Lesled, Lord of the Western Isles,
And Editha of Lorn, to altar step.

HEISK. (*to HAIG*). Betrayed ! thou art damned ! Cicero
indeed ! [*Exit.*

HAIG. Come, Lorna ; of this brooch learn the quick
work,

To save thy good man from the jaws of fiends.
Speak, and high service do to holy cause.

[*ABBOT advances, and LESLED and EDITHA
join to step to altar as LORNA is pushed
forward. Low music.*

ABBOT. Who doth forbid, let him or her speak
clear.

LORNA (*agitated*). Oh, woe is me ; twice woe'd and
woo'd a day.

ED. (*disengaged*). The woman of my dreams. Oh,
God save us. [*Cries ; sinks in seat.*

LORNA. Oh, woe is woman's lot. Oh, woe is man's !
Heaven rain mercy on our poor heart's pains.

ABBOT. Dost claim to be the Lord Lesled's wedded
wife ?

ED. Married ! I pray that still I be in dream.
Old night is come again, and vision drear.
Man is but man ; to woman's nod he's near.

[*LORNA swoons ; is borne out, followed by
ABBOT ; EDITHA rises commandingly.*

If I were my father's daughter, now I
Would like the raging sea demand some lives,
And lay eternal silence on provoking crafts.
But I'll not agitate ; I'll calm to save.
That looks no wife. Anon, good friends ; know
me

Proud as the full rig of an ocean bark.
I alone may be intrusted with my lord.
Leave us a little, and 'twill come most well.

[*Exeunt all, amid murmurs, except LESLED
and EDITHA.*

This comes of not hurrying Haig's removal.
You wear stern look, which used might have saved
this.

- LES. Since I knew thee, one I have loved, thyself ;
How devotedly the angels know.
Where were you in the darkest of my hours—
You whose image burned through long nights ?
Oh, frail mortality's not with iron staunch,
But blanches in the cloud, sinks in the storm.
And not in woman's silence can man see
The bright vision of his heart inspiring.
I know thy love of lands ; these were not me.
Nay, but I chide thee not. It was thy course.
Then tiny lights look brighter in the gloom.
- ED. Oh, stay the fatal word that is my death,
Death to thee, as me ; or if dost, be sure.
I'll not believe that thou didst marry her.
Gather lowly flickering corner light,
When orb thou lovedst was in its eclipse.
Oh, sir, where is thy patience for the stars,
If the long cloud brings cursing at the sight ?
I'll not believe it. If 'twere fact, 'twere false.
- LES. This night, that brings new wrangle to the
time,
Brings forth a tale of pity, not of love ;
Sees thee and me like bankrupts standing spent,
Bent with sad management, a weary sight.
- ED. Hark ! these sounds that burst upon the ear.
She acts thy wife, and all the men cry out.
Heiskar, general, Haig—all enemies,
To turn upon me and on thee, to rend us.
- LES. I will not leave thee. For thou art my wife.
My sword is in my hand, when my wife fears,
And help that I had sunk for these past years.
- ED. I know thou art my life ; only act thus,
And the night again is ours to win all.

Enter MACNEIL.

- MAC. Haig, malicious hound, excites to arms.
Heiskar's in strength ; the general in rage,
And threatens at once to seize Lord Lesled.
The moment Haig's with the villain Murdoch.
- ED. Here take thy sword. Human pest destroy.
Every honest purpose ravel by him.

He's now scheming with thy murderer ;
There through the corridor he'll quick be found.

LES. Reason is in thy soul. [*Takes sword quietly.*]

ED. Cursed be the instance from my bosom torn—
My uncle Comyn on the altar slain
By Bruce, thy king and paragon of men.
How suits Haig's treachery with this home thrust
now ?

'Tis black as hell, and in thy castle armed ;
Not fled to call on heaven for forgiveness ;
Laughing at the willing sacrifice to fiends.

LES. Thou dost persuade me to this action.
My sword is part of me, and Haig is dead.

[*Exit LESLED (side) ; locks door.*]

ED. He's gone ; not in reason to try tigers,
Or pause over adders' bites or wasps' stings,
Yet with high precedent to slay the man.
He knows his way and will secure the cat.
Now will our days be clear, set fair from this.

Enter DUART.

DU. Lesled's people stir ; with them he's safe to strike.
Out and be free of dreadful treachery.

Enter D'ARGENTINE and Soldiers.

D'ARG. Lord Lesled goes to the king my master.
In Murdoch's corridor 'tis said he waits.

[*Tries door.*]

DU. If he be there he's lost ! The floor invites
The walker to step sudden to doom's jaws.
The gracious sun in the west's sunk from sight,
And darkness covers day. O Scotland, rise.
Lesled from deathbed flee ; away, away ;
Scotland lies dead.

[*Exit DUART. EDITHA tries door to corridor,
and is surrounded by Soldiers.*]

ED. (*freeing herself*). Scotland dead ? These nations
never die.

God wills these islands to be one free state,
The two as one. When this sad strife lays down,
They rise to higher conquest of a world.

Undo thy bondage to false necessity,
 And walk the proud lord minded to the best.
 Open these passages and bring my lord,
 That is my husband. Haste him to wed.
 Fairweather spouse, pretty thing to pet,
 Is not the Maid of great Lorn and the Isles.
 I am the princess here and do command.
 Quick, undo the door and let me find my lord.

D'ARG. Thou'lt not be mocked in thy heroic strife.
 My brave lass, thou must go with me again.

ED. I care not for the paltry altar rites ;
 Marriages are made of hearts in union ;
 And glorying triumphing in the cause.
 He by my temptation's there to die.
 I walk in death's dark vale. Come, my sad
 stars,

If too conscious of my sin despair
 Of higher power, if thou hast yet one grain
 Of pity for me, let me press the lips
 That truly are my husband's. Though the place
 Teems with mockery of the words I cry—
 Earl, lover, husband, master, all in one ;
 Thus to thy arms I take my final flight.
 Lie where thou liest, where I laid thee—low.

[*As if to break through door ; door bursts open,
 and LESLED returns dishevelled, followed
 by DIARMAD.*

My husband and my lord ! [*Embracing him.*
 What thou hast done that with thee's done well.

DIAR. Strangely it was. The tottering rafters stood,
 And Haig to move did look to have his doom.
 Disdaining his own peril, my lord leapt,—
 Valor's surest champion, secret brave—
 And never parted till Haig's feet were fixed
 Firm on the steady ground. I sing his song,
 Who will proclaim him to the listening earth.

Enter HAIG (pale).

LES. Finding Haig at death's door there, I saved him.

ED. Great as great David in Engedi's cave.
 He saved his enemy. All hail, high chief !

This wondrous kindness moves still the world well,
And may be parent to a new-born love.

LES. Look ! lo ! there ! Be the ghost purged of ill.

Hence,

If hollow heart that knows no flooding hope.

We, pitiful, still want society !

But not that. Kindness with our friends walks in.

Hast devil cast with blood ; night's tears ta'en off

Unreal mockeries and foul thoughts of day.

Proceed we then if gracious goodness stirs.

Share thou my great joy. I'll give thee the full.

The Abbot come and wed the fair not faint.

D'ARG. Men, for your king arrest the truant there.

ED. Stay ! Hear the cry of Islesmen loud and long—

“Long live Lord Lesled,” and the marriage-bell.

They've gained the castle and this eve have won ;

For I made sure of that for wedding hours.

The tread of Scottish arms in old triumph

With stirring music breaks the spell of night.

All hail in peace, the place my lord has sown.

Thy arms, general, to merry dances swing.

*Music. Enter Scottish Soldiers, Abbot, and LORNA,
MACNEIL, DUART, and others.*

My Lord Abbot, welcome we all again.

ABB. This lady has recorded grievous error,

And in her one time's woe had dreamt of two.

Now Holy Church incorporate two in one—

Lord Lesled and Princess Editha.

HAIG (*aside*). 'Tis very sweet to think pale lovers
win.

But blood being bad doth a new grief begin.

I'll upset that easy as high jelly.

LES. Editha, thee I wed, or single be ;

One life, one love, and that my wife is thee.

Off the ruffian world sure we seek to flee.

ED. One man is man, and but my husband see.

Be my lord that, and find what I shall be.

[*They kneel.*]

ACT III.—THE QUARREL.

SCENE—*Room in Ardtornish Castle. Enter LESLED and LORNA ; MORAG following.*

LORNA. I beseech you to bring me to your wife.
I would not have your kindly nature wronged
For the whole world. My grief overwhelms me.

MORAG. My lady's headache is now much increased.
I pray you do not undertake this tale.

LES. Thy patriot path is strewn with myrtle bloom ;
And my wife will not want to see it rough.

Enter EDITHA, with open letter (they recede), also HAIG.

HAIG (*watching LORNA and LESLED*). Now each ogle
is worth a thousand pounds.

I make money of winkings and blinkings.

ED. Sir, the general advises me in this letter, since he hurries south, that I am to be guided by you, as sheriff in these parts, in assuming the government of the West. Is this so ? Yet, if King Edward were dead, I am Bruce's.

HAIG. It is attested with the royal seal, madam. You take the oath to do your duty by all laws and to all.

ED. Then, sir, I will be advised by my Lord Lesled, who is my husband.

HAIG. Then you swear, madam, to act by the laws.

ED. I need scarce speak to my lord about it. I swear.
With the laws we're relieved of care.

HAIG. He's there. Ah ! and with Lorna's now speaking.

How vain are women of a prince's favour ;
How silly she to wear his brooch here still.

ED. I did not know she's still in the castle.

Wearing his brooch is sad, and mad as well.

HAIG. Will you please join them, and I'll call again.

I have a mind ill suited to such scenes.

I'll wed mind as beauty—when I do wed.

ED. Sir, you will please to know I'll not join them.

[*Recedes angrily ; HAIG following her.*

LORNA (*to LESLED*). I have much still to say, and
would desire

More conference soon. Meantime preserve you,
Dear lord, from the vile tongues of ignorance,
Of greed, and malign displeasure, seeing
Your high estate ; humbly as 'tis worn.
Master Haig I will avoid all time hence.

MORAG. 'Tis well, and augurs sweet intention.

[*Exeunt LORNA and MORAG.*

ED. Wretch that she is. She must not return here.

HAIG. She wears it to tease and plague him with it.

But I am lawyer to Lord Heiskar still,
And should say nothing in this castle lost.

ED. I know thou art frank, and utterest facts,
Often with harshest force. Still we should
hear.

What do you urge of knowledge on this head ?

HAIG. Your castle cannot certainly be a pool
For the loose fishes to swim and sport in.
Meantime, my Lord Lesled desires you speak.

[*Exit.*

LES. Editha, that was Lorna seeking you.
You are engaged. But do you send for her.
There's not in west of Scotland after you
A lady more enamoured of good deeds.

ED. I would she would go. I don't want her.

LES. 'Tis not that your politics are different,
Or that she lost her head at our wedding,
That you should be for ever offended.
I am yet to know Editha is not high
Above the petty wills of little minds.
Her farm, taken from her own loyal arm
Now provides nothing ; and I would send her
To the good land at my Duntulm Castle,
Where we will get the sooner. She excels
In domestic virtues, admirably
Combining gaiety with usefulness.

ED. Send her where you like, out of my sight.
I will not think of her at all. Discard her.

LES. She cannot away. Wife, you have her lands,
Got through her high-souled loyalty to Bruce ;
Ay, for Bruce, for Bruce. Can you keep them
long ?

Her little crofts, her little burnies wimpling,
The tiny sheep, the cow or two, the stack ;
But, sweet, her own, and to her heart-strings tied.

ED. I do believe her sweet, since thou dost say't.
Pray you give her back all I have of hers.

LES. That's my Editha : magnanimity
Is master over every breath wafts to her.
I'll to the steward and join you here quick.
Arranging for Duntulm gifted to her,
For in restoring we must give her more.

[*Exit.*

ED. If thou'rt not simple, now my life is rent.
Would her lands and mine were over the seas,
Than these should have brought her to my back
door.

Enter HAIG.

HAIG. They all come to me, every one of them.
Upon the rack, who's there but me to call ?

ED. Heaven's mercy come to wife unequal
To the high purposes of man's pure soul ;
Especially if he soars above all law.

HAIG. These poets play the mischief with their reason,
My lord's giving off lands—miles to Lorna.
They'll sing away their blackest sins with rhymes.
Oh I have watched how badly rhymers match.
One lives on's airy nothings, and his wife
Should laugh to blow him bubbles o'er his head,
Not tease his days and nights to sweat for gold ;
She does not need it with so much fine fun.
Another will a patriot sing ; lose time
While his wife scolds. His eyes, once bright,
Get dull ; her demands for place not met, for
That means purple dresses and rare gems,
Than animations at the old hearth-stones.
Thus all in misery to muddled states,
And the angels weep, young poets sing old's fate,

- While the like creatures rush again to mate.
Failures damp them not ; exceptions they.
Oh, I'll swear, though, some lands he gives are yours.
- ED. Thinkest thou I'm gloating now upon my lands,
And the vile garbage that cold men live on ?
No ! I would not, Master Haig, lose my love,
That proud inheritance of high heaven,
For all the mines of Europe and the East.
Give me to show it, whole for me the heart
That is my husband's, and the rest is thine,
Or show it but the hollow heedless pit,
Then dash me in it, and these clods dispose
Beyond the seeming of material time.
Oh, I might cling most sadly to old pelf ;
But lose my husband now, I lose myself.
I have a headache, and fear I rave badly.
- HAIG. Princess, you know me well of old—handy
And most ingenious for awkward fixes.
No idle tears, no soothing sentiments,
No vain sympathies to stop due action,
No lies to hide the truth, make ruin blacker,
My name is plain fellow and my food facts.
- ED. Plotter ! what dost thou plot ? I know thee yet
To hasten ruin which thou seest come on.
What ruin's here but of thy making, wretch ?
- HAIG. Well, well ; that's frank, if you believe it so ;
But 'twas never proved I did but rightly.
I am's other men ; yet more to the point,
Steadier to my course of winning ;
Aye, and more honest, for I speak my mind ;
Have no mysteries. My case is Heiskar's,
The only case I have just now, well worked.
- ED. Prove the general's assertion, which is yours,
Or let a dagger reach thy lying breast.
He says still that I'm not married truly.
- HAIG. Am I a god to know all men's secrets ?
Anxiety has made you lose judgment.
I will not answer to such foolish rage.
If I'm bound to you by strong self-interest,
I'd let the past be but a passed-off dream.
At present I am Heiskar's man of law,

Trying to prove you, Princess, were not married,
For that my lord was to this Lorna wed.

ED. Oh, insolence to come and tell me that,
Still to repeat such gross things to my face.

HAIG. Sentiments and sympathies would keep me back,
Not frank and honest offering of facts.

ED. What is thy price for facts? You sell your facts.

HAIG. First catch your facts, for which your all must dig,
But that's not truth; so covered facts with dross,
I little get the truth. 'Tis not for sale.

Divine youth, as yours and Lesled's, needs't not.

ED. Take a year's rental of my land for facts.

HAIG. For nothing you've the fact your father cursed
Lord Lesled as mad, and your betrothal.

ED. These I've taken on me. I must hear more.

HAIG. Say two rents then; in civil wars they're bad.

ED. Three if you will, to give me facts this day.
No grinning fiend more tortuous than this
Can hold me in suspense 'tween hell and heaven.

HAIG. Here's no straight proofs the pair were married.

ED. Take four years' rental, lawyer, for thy speech.

HAIG. I will. With this retaining fee, counsel.
The friar's absent, but returns this day;
With his certificate the case might close;
Yet man cannot be wed against his will.
If in a fraud, fear, drink, or jest he weds,
We then examine previous passages,
To find the truth of the uxorious scene.
I know the case 'gainst Lesled pretty full.
Lorna's my client too; and in my room,
When I was sitting in the chamber next
She scribbled verse which here I have in hand
"O Lesled! 'tis thy sorrow to be bound;
I am thy bird; still wilt with me be found
And so on; justifying surmises.
Lorna had a time with Le Bel Philippe;
And worshipping my lord, must have won him.
Lorna brings sweet summer to men's bosoms;
From the bright Loire returned to conquest.
No man could say nay to her advances.
If I loved not to be wise I'd die for her.

ED. Villain ! truthful as thou art named, this is
A lie more riotous than ever issued.

HAIG. Madam, these are the facts you bought from me.
Recall, defer delivery ? I still sold.
I sell, I sell my brains which are most dear.

ED. Sayst thou my lord deceives me ? Never, sir.

HAIG. I do believe he does what he can't help.
No man's further from wish to do a wrong,
But he may at it by unconscious start.
How all the world is steeped in ignorance,
And doubly dark in knowing of ourselves !
How riches rare are passed by all men by,
And poorest vanities are hugged to death !
And springing flowers are trampled down as weeds,
And rude breaths blast the sweetest voice of time !
I may not judge Lord Lesled, though give facts.
I would now humbly take my leave some time.

ED. Then hast thou delivered all thy goods, sir ?

HAIG. Nay, nay ; sufficient is it for the day.
Since I returned from London I've all news.
The Church held forfeit, on your flight to south,
Some lands near by, which my lord got of you,
And housed some Venetian dancers on.
These are reported again at hand.

ED. Oh, drown them—in the Adriatic.
Drown Lorna—in the Atlantic Ocean.
Away with the whole kettle of loose fish.
My lord is noble, good, and rich with love,
But the prey of vile designing thieves.
He would command an empress of the Inds.
Chanting of his evening hymn, Columba
Fells the heathen magic and wins all.
I dare not think but he's the heart of truth.

HAIG. I swear he is. 'Tis his good-nature kills.
The whole wreck of due propriety comes
Of women loving him. Well to cloisters flies ;
And well he had not caught you in this place,
Where his nunnery is on your lost lands.

ED. Not a spadeful of this soil remains ?

HAIG. Not a barrowful, most certainly.
I saw some flower-pots at the windows filled.

ED. When sang his morning hymn to his sad lute,
He proved that all creation lived for good !

[*Retires a little.*

Devils give light and to advantage show
When our once angels black and backward go.

HAIG. Her passion's turned with my cunning screw.

ED. (*on her knees*). Witness, high heaven, that here I
give up

All thoughts of vengeance and pray for sure calm,
As teems my brain with plans of quick revenge.

HAIG. Princess, be prepared for priest's certificate.

ED. What certificate !

HAIG. The certificate by the priest who wed them.

ED. The certificate ! Liar and slave ! that is not.
My back with that is broken, and I sink.
If it were true that he had married her,
And in a moment came to wed with me,
The man is drunk, mad, or a mere rogue who
The common moral of mean life has lost,
Bankrupt to the pocket of a beggar,
And cannot show the effigy of health.

Who imagines he can have gone so wrong.

HAIG. If he did wed, as this will show—

ED. O God ! thou canst not show he wed her !

HAIG. I'll be sorry for my cousin and you—

ED. He was wed ? Why, in plain thought of day
I'd set him down into the silver sea,
Dissolve him in the all-embracing air
That takes the noxious vapours in it,
And plaguetheland no more. Dost thou think, Haig,
I could for my youth's dearest fancy clasp
What turned a monster. Oh, I am human,
And, if I am the victim of some spell,
Loving as of old what once was truth,
But now conceals a hideous thing of lies,
I would spurn it for all its early health,
And rid my bosom of the memory.
The certificate—oh, the certificate.
That drives me frantic to the woods and wilds.
I know there's none, thou damned rogue of hell.

[*Exit.*

HAIG. Better had she been my client all along ;
And my wife too. She comes just now too late.
With her sweet lands I will my land-greed sate.

Enter LESLED.

Your wife's headache gets worse. The times are
harsh.

LES. Do you believe in the leech, sir—the blood-
sucker ?

HAIG. I am a doctor of laws, my lord.

LES. A doctorer of laws. We bleed for it.

Re-enter EDITHA.

Now has my wife lost blood. Ah ! she is pale.

[*Exit HAIG.*]

Editha, love, 'tis strange this sudden ill.
The Venetian dancers can be got at once.
This diversion will amuse the fair one,
Who with ugly customer has lost an hour.

[*Kisses her.*]

ED. Drown them ; they are corrupt and corrupting.

LES. Nay, save them. They love their art, which
pleases.

Savage we'd be without delight in art,
Which to our bosom brings the greater world.

Enter FRIAR JOSEPH.

FRIAR J. The Venetian dancers are languishing in my
lord's displeasure. My lord, will they enter ? They are
ready.

ED. Devils ! I did not expect this treatment. The
castle is a warren for harlots.

[*Retires unseen.*]

FRIAR J. Your wife's not well, my honoured lord.

LES. Is your ballet the Queen of Sheba seeking at
Jerusalem to puzzle the king with her riddle ?

FRIAR J. Woman is a riddle in herself. No ; their
dance is that of Miriam celebrating the overthrow of the
Egyptians. Moses and the people overcome Egyptian
fascinations. They come.

Enter DANCERS.

LES. Ladies, you are welcome ; teach us in the poetry of your motion ; in presence of this whirling time are dreams of the high enduring empyrean. One of you, I remember once, seemed to float across the ground without the miseries of corroding toil and the coarse supports of breath (*shakes hands*). One other would mount to the skies, unencumbered with dross, thinking only of the society of the gods (*shakes hands*). I would heaven ordered we should receive from your allegories the fruitful fancy of higher life, removed from the painful legacies of sin and ignorance. Meantime, these press our backs, aye, overwhelm multitudes.

ED. Twenty thousand devils in his body. [*Exit.*

LES. Pray retire a moment till we arrange.

My wife is ill, but this will be well for her.

[*Exeunt DANCERS.*

FRIAR J. My lord, your wife did glare now.

How like her father she did look at us.

LES. A toast, Joseph ; to my wife's health to-day.

[*They drink.*

FRIAR J. My lord, I would deliver you from any bondage. .

LES. Ay, indeed we have need to raise our vision above experience. O God, how would we die with it ! Without we struggle above the visible, life itself is nothing but the grave ; the valiant sword an instrument of torture ; the great clamour of war, the shriek of fear and worthless rage ; the shout of victory, the death-knell of charity ; love the snowflake in the river, or the gathered elements to storm, destruction, and death.

FRIAR J. Your lordship with your lute would to-day do well with my lady.

LES. The old song of Margor's idiot husband will not away, Friar. You remember Margor, Joseph. She lived and loved with her man fifty years. One night she gave of their meal to a poor tramp ; out in the cruel night of storm Margor stepped in kindness. The old man in a frenzied fit of jealousy followed her, and, God's love, felled her to the earth, the blood of the gentle creature

freezing with the snow. He had ceased to congregate with Christians. It will not out of my head.

My Margor stirs, when seen or heard
First of the life of morrow.
She, poor soul, gets up and's doing,
From off her chaff and pillow,
Nor murmurs at the meal-bag's lot,
Nor wishes other fellow.
Old and old and old I cringe.

FRIAR J. My lord, merciful powers of heaven !

Does that story haunt you from what we've seen ?

LES. More gaiety of heart, Joseph ; bring the dancers.

[*Exit.*

FRIAR J. I who saw King Edward found the great Friary of St. Francis, shall I not be merry ? Cannot we play because the busy knaves of pride are at their deadly work ?

[*Drinks.*

(*Sings*) The women are a gane wud.

Oh, that he had bidden awa ;
He's turned their heads, the lad,
And ruin will bring on them a'.

Enter HAIG.

HAIG. Banish me to Iona for a sexton if the Church does not make men merry. There is gaiety in it for the cure of souls and jealous wives. There is virtue in a church.

FRIAR J. Ha ! ha ! ha ! We of the Church can draw cures, sir, not ready-made in Holy Writ. (*Drinks.*) I pray you how much of mercurial wit wouldst thou wish to cure my lady of her tantrums ; or would an ounce of saturnine humour shame her into softness ? Satire, sir, is cheap ; we sell that as a low-priced commodity ; we do not recommend it for domestic purposes. Buy, buy, buy for this castle. The juice, sir, of the grape hath merits in warming the heart to a kindness ; only, Master Haig, some warm over-much, and the steam bursts it up. Ha ! ha ! ha !

[*Drinks.*

Come make them be happy together,
For where there's a will there's a way.

[*Drinking glasses with HAIG.*

HAIG. 'Tis only great men, friar, who truly value wit. I am overborne if I do not laugh at the pompous fools of fate. Bestow upon me quickly a dose of thunder, not from Holy Writ, but from thy humour, friar, in the shape of this certificate of a marriage between my lord and Lorna of Darroch. Sell me, witty physician of the soul, artificial thunder on this occasion to clear sultry fancies. Thy compound is not for digestion, but explosion and blasting of foul humours in the Lady Editha.

FRIAR J. I will. By the mass, I like your wit. On All Fools' Day you devise wittily. Haig, 'tis a world I curse daily for dulness (*signs*). Master Haig, thy teeth are keen, but thou art a merry wag too. Thy solemnities are relieved. The common rascals provide us only with slow melancholy funerals; their entertainments are a dull chorus of common-places which crush our spirits with noise (*drinks*). But thou, man of gold bags, thou indulgest thy humour to laugh, laugh, laugh, laugh.

HAIG (*aside*). Now comes that fatal stroke, hell's last great touch,

That breaks with all the reason of a life.

Editha will most surely be revenged—

And I—I will as surely rise to powers. [*Exit.*]

FRIAR J. (*taking up empty wine bottle*). Art thou simple and natural, and givest of thy fulness, or peradventure scarcity, or art thou only squeezable out of sense of duty? Thou fellow, empty? How so, sir? Dost mock me with axioms that truth lies at the bottom? Nay, thou rogue, thou art like the rest, hast sayings to suit thy needs—

(*Sings*) In wine is verity,

And pure sincerity.

What's dark as night

'Twill bring to light.

[*Exit.*]

Enter HEISKAR and HAIG.

HEISK. The mighty Edward's dead, Edward the first,
On his proud march to be revenged on Bruce.

HAIG. There's a second yet; but that tells nothing.

HEISK. Report they 'twas near Carlisle he died,
And 'twas his will his body should be borne north.
Bruce's star rides brightly in the sky;

And by its guidance men hasten forward.
 Quick now, sir, prove Editha to be free.
 I take the road to-night with hundreds
 To meet young Edward on his way and swear.

HAIG. Be jocund at the hopes Editha's free.
 Who knows the second has his father's spirit?
 Likely he squanders all the brave sire's gain.
 Keep watch on the English road and wait me.
 Seek we first to know sure young Edward's
 mind ;

Whether the barons rally to his side ;
 Has he the power to raise the yellow coins.
 Lesled is waiting for the Bruce to speak ;
 And as Bruce stirs my lord is bound to go.
 Watch ; an hour is like to bring a crisis.

HEISK. I will do as you direct ; I will wait. [Exit.

HAIG. Now what the devil does Edward dying ?

My share of his shroud's a thousand acres.
 I loved Justinian and his union,
 I his sheriff ; no parliament for Scots ;
 Perhaps no king else than Bruce ; and I sunk.
 Men their misfortunes find in others' rheums.
 Wind on a king's head or a beggar's robs
 Men of the fairest blossoms of their days.
 How am I poorer ! Then to new device ;
 For can Bruce win, must I be in to gain.
 Not seventy—what the devil—dying. [Exit.

*Music. Enter EDITHA and MORAG, MAC-
 NEIL and DUART, LORNA and DIARMAD,
 afterwards LESLED and others.*

*Enter Dancers, representing Pharaoh's
 Daughter with the youth Moses, fol-
 lowing them a troop of Egyptian
 dancers bearing golden cups and shells
 which each offers to Moses, who stands
 firm and unbending at their offers ;
 they retire displeased. Then enter
 Miriam and the Jewish maidens, bear-
 ing small sheaves of corn ; Moses allows
 himself to be surrounded and borne
 off.*

LES. The young prophet, son of the house of Levi, had a goodly heritage of character. God's love be ours too ; for the desert, the well-side, for Horeb—

ED. (*risen*). Iniquitous and insolent, mad-like.

Jezebels who should be thrown out till dead.

What woman will, I will ; not that ; avaunt !

LES. Give o'er the dance. My wife's too ill to see't.

ED. Sicken me no longer with sorcery ;

Stand forth from those thy black connections.

LES. I pray you, friends, to leave us for a time,
You think of this as not my wife's fair way.
She has been lately, like myself, sore tried,
Leave us awhile.

[*Exeunt all except LESLED and EDITHA.*

Dear love, I am sore grieved.

ED. Who are you ?

LES. Thy husband ; thy loving husband.

Alas ! my wife, what see there to glare at ?

Edward is dead. But you are brave to do,
And side with Scotland's king, for all your kin.

ED. Not to be mocked even by you—by you.

Look how my father frowns there on his grave,
On me—on me, thy paramour, no more.

Consorting with thy host of filthy hags ;
All smiles to thee, who slaps me on the face.
This the dagger I have dreamt—in thy hands ;
Release me from this frightful stroke ; I sink.

[*Sinks on couch.*

LES. Editha !

ED. (*up*). Thou dost defy deeds ; thinking them away,
With countenance as fair as clover ripe ;
Beneath, the snake that in rank grass lies hid.
Take thyself then to Bruce ; away, away.
I'll none of him, thou perjured fair and sweet.
If thou didst stay, I know I'd thee believe,
And think the black night day to hear thee,
By these soft lips that have Apollo's sway.
I'd follow thee too against my judgment,
Rend all my lands, and life, and peace to be
Companion with thee all futurity.

[*Clinging to him, then starting off weeping.*

- LES. I know not why you weep, unless it be
For sadness that ripe love might die like fruit.
But that it cannot; as the spring it lives,
Fed from the everlasting saps from high.
Ours is eternal, save false lives kill it.
- ED. Thou art as thou wert honest. Yet she's here,
Here in the castle, on our honeymoon;
And peradventure, for other hours,
The vile Arabs that here act their parts for thee,
Include in these the scandals of past time.
- LES. Is't possible? Then are my heart-strings torn,
That clave once more to my rapt dreams of joy,
That sweet affection might on knowledge grow,
And our fair motives kindred kindness strike.
Oh, I am miserable if thou art sane,
And not hysterical with too much love.
Dear heart, do not exact all to thyself.
- ED. Impudent offenders do speak of love.
But so I hear't I'm on bed of roses;
Drinking the odours of felicity,
So am I cozened with thy magic voice.
- LES. 'Tis but to prove me false; but that were hard.
- ED. I'll not stay; for thy pretence absorbs me
And pulls my judgment from its socket.
Oh proofs, proofs, here thou hast a hundred times;
Thou'dst cheat me still. Oh, thou charming wretch.
[Exit.]

Enter MACNEIL and DUART.

- MAC. They are apart ere they have time to join.
[Exit LESLED.]
- DU. 'Twill be all the better for the cause then.
He will surely join us to follow Bruce.

Re-enter LESLED followed by DIARMAD and EDITHA.

- LES. The mighty Edward dead; the star of Bruce
Ascends the zenith of the northern sky,
And doth command, without war's horrors.
- DIAR. Macdougall's proud and fiery chieftain sped,
To wreak with crushing arms his vengeful hate.
Low at Ben Cruachan's narrowest pass,

- Where the dark waters lave the precipice,
He set his thousands to withstand the Bruce ;
When from the heights brave Douglas waved his
hand,
And lo ! the host shook timid at the sight.
Bruce, as the lion, confident of might,
Entered the defile, and straightway routed
The whole mass ; in wild confusion melted.
And on Dunstaffnage waved his kingdom's flag.
His proclamation summons every son
Of Scottish birth to join his standard high.
De Lisle had seized Dunolly, but he waits
One champion Scot to fight ere he resign.
- LES. Give me my steel, my double-handed sword,
With which I practised for a chance like this,
To save men's lives with one ; this is the same
De Lisle, Lorna's betrayer. [*Gets sword.*]
- ED. The torments of the damned !
- LES. She in her hero's cause already rides.
- ED. Fire everlasting !
- LES. Editha !
- ED. The devil stalks with tail in broad daylight.
That sword is your paint to hide the devil.
- LES. Nay, nay, 'tis but a scene that has no thought.
My true Editha has no power of this.
Love, do you sleep and wake and find me still
Thy only love, and heart, and life, and will.
Seek you no war : woman should have her mind.
Man and wife may differ, yet to each be kind.
- ED. Excellent one, thou knowest I am thine.
But wherefore chain me to thy shocks and strains ?
My lord, I am thy patient drudge and slave,
Yet do not triumph, do not mock my love ;
Thou dost ; take thyself off ; away, be quick !
There's no half force with me when I give lick.

Enter HAIG.

- LES. I might weep, but an ocean's depth of tears
Could scarcely tell what pains these strange scenes
bring.
Editha ! thou wilt not look. But, oh, farewell !

ED. (*in his arms*). Farewell ! I know you love me—
ever mine ! [Exit LESLED.

HAIG. Madam, do not eye me with displeasure ;
I ever adored to be thy footstool.
I wear a mean and hungry look at times,
With a cross voice, that please the women ill.
Beneath dull livery of the serving-man
Sweep the bright visions of a golden rule.
Madam, with sorrow illusions fly.

[Offering paper.

ED. Who welcome gives the messenger of death ?
You are a grave-digger and carry palls.

[He still presses paper.

I'm the victim of a hideous dream ;
No more ; my lord is pure as the morning air ;
And thou art murky Beelzebub below.

HAIG. I come to be instructed, not abused ;
To offer evidence, not to be damned.

[Offering still.

ED. Thou bloodless minion of cold greed, begone.

HAIG. Madam, remember your oath. I am here,
The sheriff, high deputy of the King,
Your sovereign, and desire justice from you.
Sworn to put the laws in force for all men
And women—I charge Lord Lesled with crime.

[EDITHA snatches paper and reads.

ED. (*reads*). "I certify that Lesled, Lord of the Isles,
was this day married in this kirk to Lorna of Darroch.
JOSEPH, Friar of Ardtornish."

I am a liar in my love ; my love lies.

'Tis crushing truth that sinks me to the ground.

My lover charged with bigamy. Oh death !

[Sinks ; rises pale but firm.

Here stands the man who calls me his true wife,
The same the criminal I'm sworn to punish ;
I am his love. I know it. Oh, hard hit,
That my first duty is to try my husband.
O God, would the earth hide and swallow me.
Editha reigns, and to her oath is true.
Man will not taunt me that by love I fell,
Tossing justice off when my wants are by,

To give my lover freedom from the laws.
 Bring me Lord Lesled of the Isles. Seize him ;
 Place him that he have justice as the mean.

[*Recedes.*

HAIG (*aside*). Oh, I believe this tamed wild cat's honest.

I have not got her note for three years' rents.
 I'll make a warrant for Dunolly's keep ;
 Seeing which, and its jaws, Lesled's sunk.
 My cunning hand is master everywhere.
 No misfortunes go but fill my pockets ;
 No pains but lighten my labours ; no tears
 But waft me to shore of peace and plenty.
 Yet what the devil does Edward dying ? [Exit.

ED. I'm sunk into the mirk and miry way.
 I would be high too, and have been cast out.
 Now farewell joy, for all goes with his doom,
 The world where I had set a happiness.
 Farewell the castles and the halls of pride,
 The banquets rich, the gorgeous dressings,
 The minstrels' praise, the peasants' cheer and awe,
 The music of the ocean and the strings,
 And you, fair gardens, where, in selected hours,
 The balmy airs do play with lovers' sighs,
 And dreamy hymns of loftiest lands of light,
 Good-bye ; Editha's fancy's dead.

Enter HAIG, with new paper : also MORAG.

Where is your prisoner.

HAIG. Please you, not fled. So great one calls for writ.
 So quickly sign the warrant, he is seized.

[*She signs.*

My service flies, and thy hand is justice. [Exit.

MORAG. What stores of grief are gathering in this hour !

ED. Perhaps. I would avoid them. I am Lorn's.

I am alone ; my kin defeated quite.

My sworn protector their enemy joins.

My lover a fraud who stole my hand.

MORAG. Never ; I dare believe he never did.

There now, behold him in his strange surprise,
 In sorrow, as an innocent. No guilt

Is marked upon a face where rage is hushed.
A Roman woman ; pagan ; not of Christ.

[*Drawing curtain revealing LESLED bound.*

ED. O God ! a Christian. I demand the name,
And find a god if I have lost a man.
I seek no vengeance, and I'll hear no jibes.

[*Turning away and returning ; looks out,
gives loud cry.*

They turn south ! go south with him to Dunolly !
Ah ! heaven, Lesled is lost ; I'm betrayed.
Back, back, back, thou murderous villain, Haig.
They fly upon my swiftest horses south,
To lay him deep in Dunolly's dungeon.
'Tis murder this ; and at its sight I wake,
Full from my frenzied dream I could be wise
To once co-operate with this foul fiend ;
Unholy officer ; pelf's slave, hell's cheat ;—
O God, the very ruffian I had doomed,
Naked and avowed to Lesled's killing,
Set on by me to do this horrid work.
The very devil I would slay long since,
I make my first deliverer from my fears,
My lord's captor, and his now murderer.

[*Rushing away.*

MORAG. Thy people are all gone. These are all Haig's.
Heiskar demands thy kisses down below.
Thou hast played quick into the ruffians' hands.

ED. The silence of thine eyes I dare not meet.
Oh, he is sunken in the low dark cave,
Habiting at night with reptiles vile.
Plunged in the bottomless dungeon depths,
With endless caverns of grimy hollows,
Until the ocean, roaring for its prey,
Knocks for his body with weighted rock,
Which by sucking tide far off is driven.
Oh, horrible ! the justice of my cause !
Oh, mercy, mercy for the heated judge !
Lesled, in thy grave of heath or ocean
That swallowest thy life, so I am not,
I am still with thee wheresoe'er thou art,
Ere my heart breaks. 'Tis better far to flee

Than gaze upon a frightful vacancy.
Lesled ! in thy love I live, thy hate I die.

Enter LESLED, bound, between Soldiers.

Ah God ! Lesled ! I come to pluck thee forth,
Save thy sweet body, or with thy soul fly.
I declare for Bruce ; soldiers, stand you by.

[*Soldiers push her off, and LESLED is dragged away.*

LES. Too late, too late, sad wife. Thy men are fled ;
Thy husband dragged down to his dungeon bed.

[*Ex. and Soldiers.*

ED. No curse—no taunts—oh mickle more had cursed !
I had stood boldly, have thought excuses.
He is innocent, doomed by me to death !
South ! Dunolly ! dungeon ! death ! all's over !

[*Falls prostrate.*

ACT IV.—THE RECONCILIATION.

SCENE I.—*In Dunolly Castle. LESLED discovered lying asleep in dungeon. Enter EDITHA with a candle, ushered in by Soldiers, who go out.*

. ED. 'Tis now the morn, and what still loves to live
Dreams happy at the first faint streaks of day.
But here are deeds to do still of the night.
Victim of my hot rage and a rascal tongue,
I might lie down and with pale horror sink ;
Serving myself vile sentence I have brought.
Then might I know his footstep on high shore.
But they would drag me from his misery.
Thy forgiveness is as easy got's air :
Here I give mine again. Heaven give thine.
With fond lips, all in longing and in love,
I take a sad impress, an earth's last kiss.

[*Kisses him.*

O God, but they are sweet so soon to cut ;
A pierced tongue, and torn lips too, for crime,
For bigamy ; and on King Malcolm's Acts

To die if thou dost kill De Lisle, whose wife
You loved. Can then my love be free? Never!
Dead or a miracle; and if lives, maimed.
Ah! heaven, to see a Christian captive;
Guilt lies not there. His prayers long said. He
breathes;
And in a moment's at the gracious gates.

[*With dagger.*

Oh, thou must die; so now, in perfect bliss,
We two find exit, seeking glorious scenes.

[*Brings down dagger, but on floor.*

No, no, no, no; I cannot do the deed.
He sleeps most sweet. I leave it to high power;
Thus cast off the hated tool for ever.

[*Throws dagger violently.*

LES. Editha! thou art on thy knees for me,
Who should have known not to entangle thee.

ED. On my knees for pardon from my good lord,
Which he has given long since ere this hour.
Lesled, you speak as not prepared to die.

LES. I am not weary of the gracious sun;
I am not weary of the evening star;
I am not weary; we did wish to grow.

ED. 'Tis quite impossible thou canst live whole.
Haig's fangs are all complete in thy sweet flesh.
I am thy slave to do thy bidding round.
But all's in vain. And so we two should die.
Ay, go hence now; from glory of the world,
Because of my high temper, madness vile:
Great nature, mighty and still, sweet and fair,
Hurried from, since thy mistress played the fool:
Worship of the everlasting spirits
Here closed, for my judgment erred.
I have entangled, killed thee; oh, my sweet love.
'Twas never part we; lying at thy feet
For ever and for ay; the blue sky ours.

LES. Who is prepared to go with that devotion?

ED. You're not the perjured voice they said you were.
[*Tears certificate.*

It lies, as my soul yet lives to save lies.

LES. Amen! it lies. You for the priest have sent.

- ED. I need no priests ; I thee believe, as gospel.
Thou art still tricked to death, whatever do ;
Sent to the shambles. Thy neck is severed.
I see thee mangled ; that horror maddens.
How easy to be free. Wilt not go hence ?
I'm thy slayer. With this dagger send me
Forth from the living world to thee I've lost,
Then meet me, love, upon the shore beyond.
- LES. Ah ! my dear wife, man cannot map his part
In this his day ; as for the life beyond,
His is to get. No leaping to the heaven.
- ED. (*wildly*). Save you, my lord, and your proud wife ;
oh save
The bitter death that from foul failures spring.
Take me by the throat—thus, thus, thus !
[*With fingers at his throat.*
The wild beast holds this castle mangles thee.
Living, thou art a bleeding thing of shreds.
Thine eyes are hanging from their sockets, and
Thy tongue pierced. Oh, what a sight is there !
O God ! Now should we die in here and save't.
Hark ! hark ! the angels sing the welcome song.
Hark ! and go out like music of pale stars.
[*Distant hymn ; toll of heavy bell.*

Enter MACNEIL and DUART.

- MAC. Lesled, thy wife is frenzied ; in madness
Has prepared thy requiem. Oh woman !
Stay thy rage. Thou dost still a viler wrong.
- ED. Doomed to be baulked of every due ;
I see a husband ; but what's he ? a rag ;
A poor thing tethered in a ragman's cart ;
A lamb with throat cut in a butcher's hand.
And I would go out gently like a star.

*Enter Soldiers ; she takes up candle and leads head
of procession.*

- LES. I pray you first see my wife well bestowed ;
See her rest, and tell her no more of me.
- MAC. She will not rest. Piteous angels come.

ED. Behold my father raging o'er his tomb.
 His eyes are curst cats certain of their prey.
 No, no, old puss ! not Lesled's mad ; 'tis I.
 Take back thy curse on him—I am his flesh.
 I head procession for each fight he's in.
 March, march, march ; I march with him to glory.
 The combat, the combat ; God defend us.
[Bell tolls ; music ; exeunt.

SCENE II.—*Open place in Dunolly Castle. Enter HAIG followed by MURDOCH.*

HAIG. There were such noises I fancied murder,
 That in her rage Editha killed my lord.
 Winds sink their furies, oceans smoothly flow ;
 Eerie landscapes call their dark paths to peace ;
 And should we bury troubles at our sides.
 News from below, if none here yet settled ?

MAC. Bruce and five thousand men are two miles off.

HAIG. Thou tearest my soul to a hundred rags.
 This lies against my crowned high estate.
 Can power from long years wither in an hour ?
 Then 'tis a worthless cheat this life of man ;
 Born to sweat and labour for high uses,
 And in a flash the whole structure fallen !

MUR. Friar Joseph swears to have thy life, my lord.

HAIG. That's not well. 'Twas for Lord Lesled's good,
 and his wife's, we did the trick. And it was the law
 too ; not me. One little rift, just one move made a
 beginning with, and there lets in a full flood of evils.
 The entire world then falls on our defenceless heads ; for
 an error in judgment, mind—the whole idiots, railers,
 hypocrites, sorners, and common beggars. And, Murdoch,
 I say, am I sport of those—that lay thus their first foul
 paws on our weak parts, to throw dirt over our whole
 bodies ? And what for ? A move that has gone wrong.
 For this we are to sink out of the sight of inglorious fools.
 I'll not let them gloat over any innings—those that
 spurned me in unprosperous youth : their own sorrow
 shall be my joy, their pains my pleasure, their diseases
 my health, their deaths my future life. Murdoch, have

you waited enough for De Lisle's refreshing sleep? Editha must have destroyed her warrior's nerves. Bring them forth then.

MUR. Heiskar's men are at the revolting point.

HAIG. Take thy ingenious mind to their ears,
And to their mouths. These buy up and tickle,—
The secret of prosperous gentlemen.

[Exit MURDOCH.

Edward the Second may be dying too.

Is he not weakly? Kings should be blacksmiths.

Enter HEISKAR with drawn sword.

And Heiskar, and most men, fools, may follow.
Perdition seize the hearts of men that whine,
And the giddy chiefs of state who lure us
With brave show, and then in action falter.
Take off thy palsied arms and wait events.
If thou want'st confidence, then art thou damned,
Or take Editha to thyself; she's here.

HEISK. Bruce is near by, and Edward Second's fled;
Which means, thou rascal, thy end here is come,
And so mine too. And since by thee I'm fooled,
The time is come for reck'ning, good my dog.
Ho! Torquil, Dougal; Heiskar to rescue.

HAIG. I am thy heir; give up thy life then quick,
That hazards it so rashly at this hour.

[Stabs HEISKAR.

HEISK. The stars are all a cheat. Oh, I am dead.

My crucifix! now 'tis my refuge, lost.

Oh, Lesled, Lesled! thou shouldst be my heir;
To thee I look; alas! how fallen kind.

[Dies. HAIG pulls him out, throws body
over into the sea and re-enters.

HAIG. A sad toothless shark laid in his sea-bed.

How should we pest heaven with paltry fears,
Knowing of our sure return to the dust.

The wave majestic, and the rock to break;
The eagle's mounting, and the sparrow's fall;

Our life is nothing save we brave it out:

If but the left pool on the beaten shore,

Or crippled bird in muddy pool stuck fast,

'Twere better gone to death, and with old graves,
Which this had got, but he insisted else.

*[Angry murmurs without ; enter Soldiers
with torches, who stop suddenly.]*

Your master swims with the fish ; killed himself,
And's over, loving he the flowing tide.

He should have waited and seen Lesled die.

[Soldiers murmur and exeunt ; music.]

Enter DE LISLE and Soldiers.

Now come our warriors for stately combat.

Enter LESLED, MACNEIL and DUART, EDITHA, and Soldiers.

Look you, I'm his jailer, the noble lord's ;
A fool that sets his greatness to be kind,
And then comes prisoner to his mean men's hands.
He's now sacrifice for patriot Bruce !

Stand forth, and for this castle fight your best,
And he who wins let him by king be blest.

All for Bruce are yet my prisoners here ;

'Tis rebel's death impugning Edward's right.

LES. Weep not, Editha ; let him weep who should.
The scoffer there might move us to a flood.

ED. Death is my desert ; I alone should die.
I declared for Bruce. Now your duty do.

'Twas I the author of the whole embroil.

Soldiers and friends, my Lord Lesled's murdered ;
First by this man, and then by my sad self.

A prisoner fighting by a damned lie.

Bruce's now below, nor needs a scene like this.

My lord is ruler and commands the keep.

HAIK. Her mind is wandering, sleepless in the night.
To her bower, where 'tis her place to plaint.

ED. A bower ? mocker ! We are shamble-owners.

Set me to climb the summit of great rocks,
And with the eagles tear, in their high beds,
At flesh of innocence, stolen with talons ;

Or caverns dark seek out where sirens sing,
To lure poor sailors to their place of death ;

Or better, climb into the clefts, where pale souls,
Racked in the nether world, do groan for pity ;

Now the clouds their devastations pluck ;
Deeds and places for a wild mind's grapple ;
Any rage to cope with madness rushing.
What noise is that ? 'Tis Bruce awakes ; we're
saved.

HAIG. Away with her. My world does not stand
still,

But goes straightforward by my certain will.

[*EDITHA is dragged out. DE LISLE advances ;
LESLED meets him ; they shake hands
and fight ; DE LISLE falls by a heavy
blow of LESLED'S on his opponent's sword
and lies at LESLED'S mercy.*

LES. I have, to promise, fought you, brave De Lisle.
In Scotland's name and Bruce's I call you
To hand this castle for my king or die.

[*Pointing his sword ; LORNA rushes forward.*

LORNA. Mercy, my lord. Oh, save him, my husband.

LES. Rise then, De Lisle. I do not seek thy life.

This castle goes to Bruce without thy death.

[*DE LISLE rises ; LESLED turns away and
returns.*

One friend, one foe, one God as ocean guards.

An English hand is given to a Scotch.

LORNA. Such gracious gifts but from the sun doth come.
[*Slow applauding.*

HAIG. With De Lisle in freedom, the castle's ours.

Lord Lesled is my prisoner ; I him keep,

Till Edward's messenger here arrives.

The trial of his crime begins to-morrow.

[*Murmurs.*

Enter MURDOCH.

MUR. Please you, my lord, Lord Heiskar's men are
mad.

Their drink has fired them to upset your rule.

Arm all and awe them quick, or blood flows deep.

[*Soldiers turn away.*

HAIG. What ! will ye yield to drunken savages,
Forsake cool temperance, clear-headed zeal ?

Enter Soldiers, hurriedly seize HAIG, and bear him as if to throw him over the wall.

What Christians are ye there that want me killed ?
Oh, test of mercy in a true one's heart.
Villains all ! A judgment this on your souls.
Hold ! why let me speak ; then drown me quickly.
Are you not bound the uttermost to save ?
You will not venture of your prophet's length ?
Give me your aid, or the tale's to heaven.
If you deny me, you're impostors, damned.
You took up the rôle, not I ; if you fail,
Who violently sought heaven, find hell.
Ah ! there you stand discovered with your lies.
Your waylaid enemy you will not save.
Away then with me, drown me, stab me quick.
I have not lived in vain these shams to show.

MAC. Just at richest mouthful the fox is caught.

On, on, ye hunters, 'tis the death he dies.

Sound shrill, ye trumpets, 'tis a royal cause.

LES. Soft ! 'tis a murder if I see him slain.

The poor fox has rights. Do not kill him now

I command ; stay, sirs ; you obey me, sirs.

Unloose him. 'Tis my due and cause to save.

Nay, do not cavil, friends. What man am I

If in the tempted hour my mercy fails,

And I prefer the heritage of show ?

I will not for the pride of greedy gain—

Set in deep blood, and awing all the world,

The poorest mortal hurt, deny justice.

Give me obscurity, and let men live.

[They let HAIG go, and exeunt.]

HAIG. My lord, I loved you, and now love you more.

LES. Ay, sir, you love me ! Thus to do me good :

To strike me in my love and liberty ;

To wound my name and life ; to cheat my wife ;

Lay me in vile dungeon ; all to be pious.

For these harsh blows you summoned all your love,

That I might grow in Christian charity !

What a god it is—if 'twere not for self ;

Liar and cheat ! why would you kill me, then—

Kill me each hour of your so loving life ?
Metaphysical scoundrel, you do feign
To fancy fairness when you rush the storm ;
Remorseless, treacherous, soulless, kindless villain,
Malicious, envious, greedy, grasping rogue,
Murderous, blasphemous, hellish monster.
These are the terms where deeds are all a lie.
This is the wretch I've just saved from death-
blows ;

Heaven has commanded, and I obey ;
But with sorrow, not alacrity ;
And I do penance. Near my faith forgot.
I'm an adventurer, cursed aye with thee,
To be my trial in my progress forward.
I stood at sight of you, man, delighted.
I hated thee and gloated at thy end ;
There, clutched in arms for doom, I had great
joy ;

Humanity gone : of ferocious states,
Symbolised by lions, bears, leopards, and beasts
With ten horns, I was deep and full inspired.
My blood was natural and all tearing.
Then out of the fox's mouth I was rebuked,
Turned into mildness. I had forgot me.
Tempted, I had fallen ; so I rescued.
Sorry to be Samaritan ; then well pleased.
Meantime I'm out of health ; have done wrong,
And silence seek in that dark place I left.
Oh, I am dejected. Oh, fallen, lost.
Good night ! Oh, I'm sick as such a sinner.
I fall a cursing ; enraged that I must save ;
The very dregs of my once potent self.
Oh, what a devil do I grow e'en now :
Away and hide thee quickly ; I am a slave.

[Turns away.]

I want to tear thee to a thousand shreds,
And blow these in the foulest winds of night ;
Which yet I'd do, and live the golden hours.
Bind me in chains, in dungeons press me ;
I sweat with rages, my dark passions howl,
Great thunders strike, vast oceans drown my hate ;

Ye elements we're of, engulf me in,
For I with bitterness have judged mercy.
Lost! Editha! I am no more a man.
Lost! lost! lost! my hoped for heaven is hell!
[*Staggers to dungeon door.*]

I save you sir; I the same condemn me,
And from this penance will come forth still kind.
[Sinks.]

MAC. He's mad ; oh, 'tis a madness thus to act ;
Blushes at impure thought, and though 'tis crushed,
Holds himself guilty as if heinous crime,
To throw the world away just at his feet.

HAIG. Make fast; man every corner for the king.
Quick! do as Lord Lesled has desired us.
Gold will be served out. Take your orders now.
Who stirs else dies. Ho! help for Lord Lesled.
Convey him hence to his selected couch.

LES. Macneil, watch well Editha through the night.
I'm beholden to thee for more than life.
Place water at my hand ; I thirst and faint.
Oh, I am grieved I felt so bloodthirsty.
Again I'm merciful, but need more prayer.
Madness to those who have not had my life.

HAIG. Murdoch, he's agitated and will not sleep;
But that sweet elixir in water suits.
Edward is gone. If Lesled sleeps all day—
Mayhap the next too—Bruce may not find us.
They say Indians have slept weeks with it.

MURD. Ay, ay; I'll get in there quickly with it.
[*Music. Exit MURDOCH stealthily, and is seen with can preceding LESLED; MACNEIL trying to keep LESLED back, but latter presses in; soldiers and HAIG forcing.*]

MURDOCH *re-enters*; *they lock door of LESLED's prison and take key.*

Enter DIARMAD and FRIAR (keeping aside).

HAIK. Man is divine ; Murdoch decrees a death.
Through him the gods go at their work of love.
Ah ! but he dies well who dies in health ;

Not putting off till to-morrow's jaundiced hour.
 Then as a star he sinks, not a candle down.
 Nay, no more of it ; Delphi does not explain.
 Let us lie down ; get thee then to thy bed.
 They do a good day's work who justice lead.
 A farmer in his cart may be the god,
 Worship his dues than famed Apollo's son.

[*Looks admiringly at MURDOCH.*
Exeunt HAIG and MURDOCH.

Enter BRUCE and Soldiers.

DIAR. Welcome, great sire. The keep is gained for thee,

Whom fortune and high honour worship now.
 I fear as these ascend, thy Lesled's fall ;
 Save they gather in a sphere beyond us.
 Two voices spoke as if he's dead in there—
 The pestilent dungeon poor wretches knew.

BRUCE. Give me a wrenching iron ; make attack.

[*Gets iron and strikes.*

See it doth yield. Lesled quickly rescue.
 Meantime, with trusty steel, we'll find our men,
 And make the castle ours. Gentle yet strong.
 The sun begins to strike the misty east,
 And sweet hopes clear to joy with lord of day.

[*Ex. and Soldiers.*

FRIAR J. With iron strike ; to break my back is due,
 That stands accountable for this great crime.
 Lesled, come forth and find thy innocence,
 And live the brightest in the new gay morn.

[*Strikes with DIARMAD.*

An hour of this vile den is certain death.
 Ah ! Lesled hears not. Is he swooned away ?
 Then we're too late, and I have murdered him.

Enter EDITHA with two Soldiers.

ED. Whilst I rave he dies. Come, soldiers ; follow.
 Ah ! who art thou that seek'st this maw of death ?
 Art friends or foes of him that lies within ?
 Imps of the hell-hound here or angels down ?
 Whatever be, step aside ; my men wait

To deliver at one blow the sweet youth in ;
Yet he be mouldering and stale ere this.

[*They drive at door.*]

FRIAR J. Oh lady, I must here confess my crime.
I am that friar who in evil hour of wine
Did think to chase thy humour off with wit ;
Harsh and unfeeling as a savage hand,
My cruel jest, I fear me, murder brings.
Oh, I am slain and little for the world ;
But what corruption's left can't dare to live.
My Lord Lesled never Lorna married.

ED. Thou unlovely priest ! But I must bear the
sight.

[You were more worthy than myself ; yet vile.
'Twas I believed thy lie ; not my lord's truth ;
He whose word was gospel in all the rest,
Save where my jealous temper raged a fiend,
And ties me with the villain scamps of earth.]

FRIAR J. Consorting with Haig's evil mind, you fell.
You knew it vile, yet you looked to gain by't.
There is your wrong-doing, and thus destroyed.]

ED. Go, do thy work to bring my lord to light.
[I fear me death's pale shroud was o'er his face
From first he saw me as tolled marriage-bell,
Disturbing I his set felicity,
And the savage hounds of greed uprousing.
Disturb I now the vermin's pleasures here.]
Not down yet ! O God, be quick ! Nor key
yet !

More valiant men set on the sleeping Haig—
They come ; haste them and my lord's out.

[*Exit.*]

*Enter BRUCE and HAIG, with Swords drawn, meeting ;
HAIG trying to make escape.*

BRUCE. Scourge of the West of Scotland, feel my
sword ;
Corrupter of Western chiefs, poisoner, groan.
Thou now must go. Great pleasure do I find
To make thee yield thy dues and sin no more.

HAIG. Pleasure, pleasure, ever pleasure seeking,
From the first breath to the last hour of life ;
While all past enterprise has rushed in vain.
Away, deluded days. Life's a juggle
That dazzles mean men's eyes, and, all found out,
Delights no more. 'Tis story of a child,
Begun in prattle, ending in cradled sleep.
Thy pleasures aren't high, lusty lord of war.
I do not fear thee ; 'tis thy tale as mine.

BRUCE. Yield thee quick the key of the dungeon there,
To save good Lesled from these jaws of thine.
Thy life with them. Mercy's to see thee gone.

[*They fight.*

HAIG. Take the keys ; two thousand pieces owe me,
I brought Scotland good from merry England.
And what have patriots but froth and tongue.

[*Door opened by DIARMAD, &c., who enter.*

BRUCE. Thy ruling passion strong in the hour of death.
[*Strikes and HAIG falls.*

No chivalry is in thy soul, but curse ;
And such as thou keepest the world in pain.

Enter EDITHA and MORAG and Attendants.

[ED. All movements leisurely that he lies low ;
But strode too long not to leave mischief vast.]

HAIG. [He whom you seek now dies. He's worked to
die,

Bankrupt, broken, with his lofty arm,
While I have won the golden prize of life ;]
I am bereft because a great king dies ;
Aye, peace and plenty had followed Edward.
Extinguished am I ; not more than earth's gods.
[A curse shall follow man who'd be a god.
Lord of battle, thy flesh feels human pains.
Thou art accursed, youth. Thy blood gets pale ;
Thy flesh falls down, and bones get stiffened,
sore.

The gods above else smite for jealousy.]
Thy Celtic kingdoms have the seeds of death,
Sink, sink, fly low, then gods may let thee live,

I see thee smitten down, like a dying fire
 Blazed out, all gone ; now out ; all out, out, out.
[Dies.

BRUCE. I hear a cry : thy husband like is ill.
 Command thy sorrow, lady. 'Tis the flower
 Fine that will not bear foulness and darkness.
[Keeping her back.

[ED. I have been there, and madly did I play ;
 Henceforth I fashion by a higher mould.
 See, where the sun looks to this cold grey stone,
 Lay down his bed, that if he breathe, he may
 Find in sweet nature of the balm he loved.]
[They lay down cloth.

Enter DUART, bearing cup.

DUART. Poisoned ! my lord has drunk of poison.
 That wretch that lies there put it in his cup.
 Oh, woe on harvest of a fertile hope.
[EDITHA seizes cup, and puts it down.

ED. Alive he is. Tell me not the poet dies :
 He is the voices of the friendly skies ;
 His the summer shadows on the mountains ;
 In sweet breezes through leafy woods he sighs ;
 His kisses are the river's prancing waves.
 No requiem ; for all nature is he.
 Sire and lords, I vow there's no death. He's here.

*Enter LESLED, borne up between MACNEIL, FRIAR,
 and DIARMAD.*

Said I true ? Lesled ! I've seen no braver.
[Embracing.

Awake, my love ; it is the hour awakes
 The sun ; our noble king the charioteer,
 Who loves with thee to shake the darkness gone.
 Is't drowsy liquid of the East ? Brush off.

[Kisses him.

LES. Is the night gone ? Ay with the morn there smile
 Some angel faces loved, and lost awhile.
 And in our souls assurance written lies.
 I have done my King but little service,
 As I have done my God. But all know me.

Let's think that fellow-sinner lying dead
Felt the due passion of humanity,
Its own dependence, as I do now,
Growing most faint—when I would not lie down—
ED. Lesled, I will drink with thee to full!
Oh, happy cup, set for my silent joys!
[*Seizes cup and puts to lips ; sees LESLED
disapprove ; she yields ; both hold
cup and let it fall.*

Impatient heart ! thou wilt not bide thy time.
LES. Oh greatest loves do rest, not fade and die.
[*Rests partly in Editha's arms.*

*Curtain.**

* The curtain descends upon a certain victory of Lesled as the *spiritual* hero. The drama therefore closes without any expiation for crime in death. Nor has Lesled, like Hamlet and Romeo, slain the kindred of his wife. The poison, however—no less than in Hamlet's case, not "an expedient of necessity," but "a stroke of art"—indicates the malign blackness following the touch of pitch.

The drama can trace excellently the logical conclusion of creeds by which men profess to act. Whether the curtain descends upon that called for in the case of a man of this world acting from a due feeling of "the Christian ideal in its brightness and unearthly beauty," each Christian will judge for himself.

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